

The working man's house : its possibilities as a home / by W. Leslie Mackenzie.

Contributors

Mackenzie, W. Leslie.
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Publication/Creation

Glasgow : Printed by Wm. Hodge, 1900.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/asuzusf4>

Provider

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

License and attribution

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine Library & Archives Service. The original may be consulted at London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine Library & Archives Service. where the originals may be consulted. Conditions of use: it is possible this item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

sm. 8^{vo}. SGH

P26017.

W. 8314

(7)

THE WORKING MAN'S HOUSE: ITS POSSIBILITIES AS A HOME.



BY

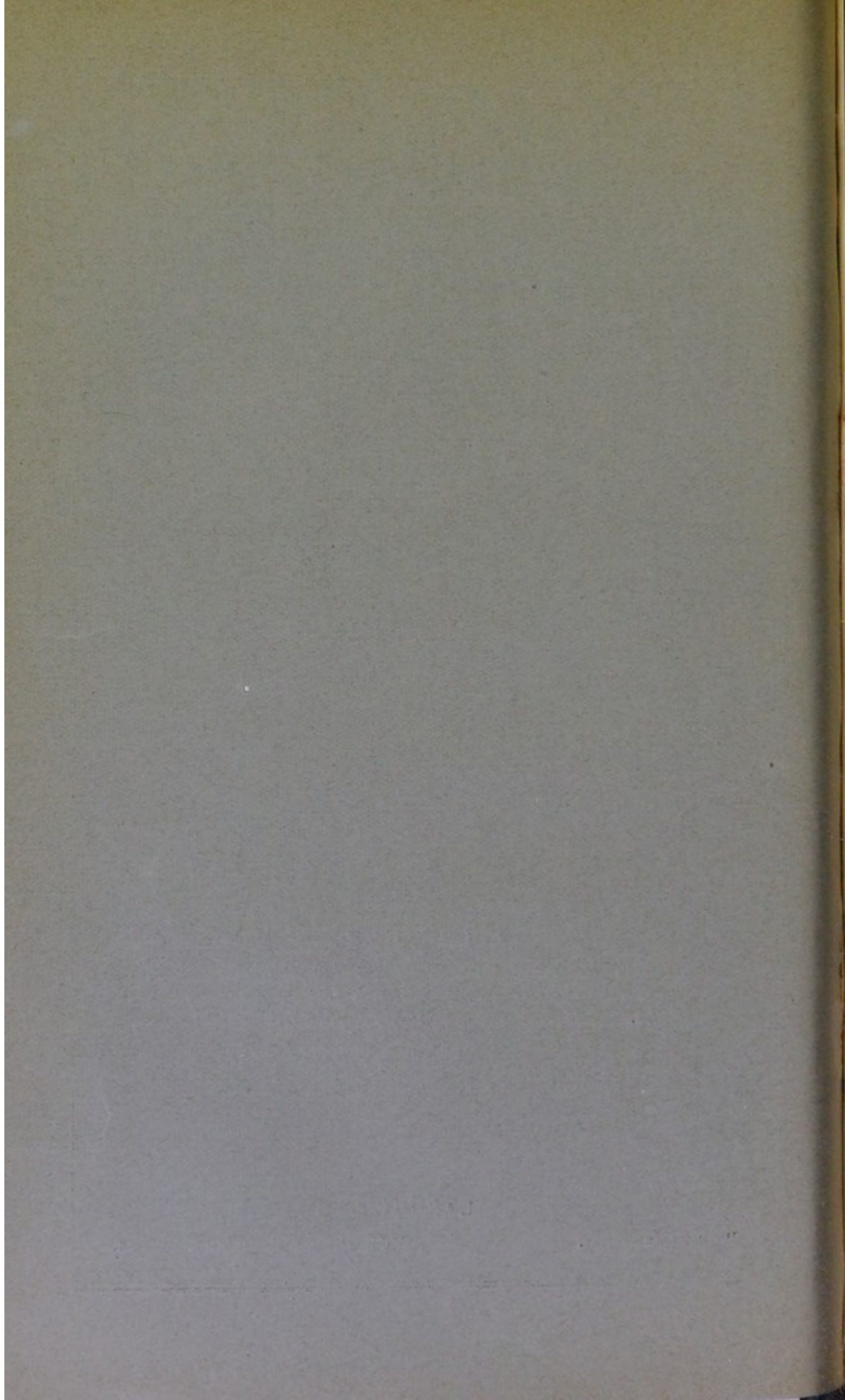
W. LESLIE MACKENZIE, M.A., M.D.

A LECTURE

*Delivered in November, 1900, to the St. James' Literary Society,
Leith, as one of a course of Health Lectures arranged by the
Rev. Dr. Hearné, and conducted under the Leith School Board.*

GLASGOW:

PRINTED BY WM. HODGE & CO., 34-36 NORTH FREDERICK STREET.



THE WORKING MAN'S HOUSE: ITS POSSIBILITIES AS A HOME.

THE problems that gather round the working man's house are engaging the most acute minds among our social thinkers. Everywhere we meet discussions on the housing of the working classes. Houses cheap enough for the class that need them most are hardly to be had. In every great city the need is increasing year by year; the supply is stationary. On the one side, builders cannot build cheap houses; on the other, the municipalities cannot sanction the perpetuation of slums. But the building of new houses and the destruction of old, however important and however necessary, leave one side of the housing question untouched. A very poor house may be very well kept. And the keeping makes all the difference. The structure of the house ought certainly to be good; but it is the function of the house that is, in the end, the most important. What I deal with here is almost entirely the functions of the house. For what I have to say I claim neither originality nor persuasiveness; I seek mainly to provoke reflection, and if I fail, it is because my method is bad, not because my case is weak. Frankly, I do not much believe in the actuality of the so-called "home," and I may have some difficulty in bringing "house" and "home" into perfect coincidence. I shall try; but if I fail, the reasons for the failure will be manifest as we proceed.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE HOME.

What, roughly, are the functions of a home?

They are, primarily, to shelter parents and children.

As to parents, the home must provide housing adequate to the occupation of the breadwinner; it must provide means of storing and cooking food; it must provide facilities for washing clothes and body, for clearing away waste, for maintaining cleanliness; it must leave room for the occupations of leisure, for the treatment of disease, for the growth and education of families. As to children, the home must provide nursing, feeding, cleansing, education. All these the house must make possible; for to be a home is the highest function of a house. The home is the focus of social activities, the headquarters of the functional social unit. The home is the home of the family, and the family needs shelter, food, clothing, education, and medical care.

THE PEASANT AND THE ARTISAN.

When I speak of the "working man's house," I mean, roughly and in a very general sense, the working man of the towns. The working man of the country is on a rather different footing. He has his open door; he can walk miles without meeting another like himself; he has fields to roam in, hills to climb, trees to shade himself under, streams that croon to him when he is weary and guide his imagination when he is glad. Compared with the invasive dust and din of the town, his day is a perpetual Sabbath of cleanliness and quiet. But he, too, has his life of the slums; he has no more than the town dweller learned the uses of a house; he oftener keeps it clean because there is less dirt to invade it; but he as often keeps his windows shut and sleeps in space too little for his dog. Even with all his advantages of open sky and clean air, the peasant is not so far in front of the town artisan as the mere living in the country seems to indicate. He suffers from damp houses, badly built, in bad situations. All over he is more vigorous, for he has freer access to the greater goods of light and air, and, which is equally important, he is less exhausted by the routine of his

labour and the multitudinous attacks that the town life makes on the senses of eye and ear. He is slow in his motions, for he has not to keep pace with cars and cabs and the preposterous array of time-savers that delude the town dweller into wasting his time. For these reasons, it is not possible to combine profitably for my purpose the rural workman and the town workman. Rather, we should keep the virtues of the rural life as a guide to us in improving the life of the town.

THE DEFINITION OF THE WORKING MAN.

How shall we define our working man? We need not define him. We shall simply classify some varieties of him. We may call him anything from £1 a week or thereby to £3 a week—just where he approaches income-tax limit. For our purpose, that is comprehensive enough.

THE IDEAL HOME.

In what I have to say, I may run counter to many common prejudices. A time-honoured song says—"There's no place like home," and when we hear it sung by Madame Patti, we allow ourselves to be almost persuaded that it is true. Indeed, it is true; but not always in the sense accepted of the majority. Some homes I know are not like any other place; they are so charming. But these are, in my experience, the rare and precious exceptions. Other homes there are that are also unique; they are harbours of every influence that can spoil men for the great issues of life. Such, it may plausibly be maintained, are the majority. We have been so long accustomed to the vague belief in the invariably good effect of home, that we never correct our notions even when the most obvious facts are against them. But the home is not the stone walls where our father and mother and brothers and sisters live; that is too often a den of evil passions and

jealousies and squalid spite and pettinesses. Home is there only where a man will wish to turn when his day's work is done; it may be the shelter for wife or child; it may be the birthplace of sister or brother; or, again, it may be the hermit's hut on the mountain-side where solitude is the one companionship, or yet again it may be the open moorland, where freedom is and where "the wind blows on the heath." And they that live in the ideal may be "citizens of the world"; to them the whole earth is their domain and one place like any other place fulfils the purpose of humanity.

THE ACTUAL HOME.

How does the house of the working man answer our description? How shall this suite of mean rooms—undecorated save by the futile art of the advertising grocer's calendar, uncleaned, unaired, odorous, crowded, unhandsomely domestic and dull—how shall this focus of broken interests and starved ideals, and petty disappointments, and spiritless resignations—how shall this temple of broken gods, be a home, a haven to run for in a storm, an altar to weep on in sorrow, a pillar of fire to guide him in the tangle of living? How shall he enter into his chamber in silence for communion with holy things when he cannot get beyond the common noises of the day, the squalling of children not his own, the offence of cooking food, or the greater offence of spilled alcohol? Is it a wonder if in sight of Arthur Seat and the chainless sea, the one beckoning him always higher and the other stirring him to companionship of far-off lands, he should live in it all unalive, heedless, content, caring only to pass the gossip of the day and spit his way home from the foot of Leith Walk? Yet let us not assume too much. The light may seem to have gone out; the spirit may seem to be sleeping; but I shall show some glimpses that may "make us less forlorn."

WHO IS THE STRONG MAN?

The other day Lord Rosebery, in his fine address to the Glasgow students, wondered if we are producing a race of the potency necessary to maintain our physical and mental stride in the march of civilised peoples. For the rural community, he had no doubt; for the towns, he had every doubt. Let us look a little into this.

Who is the strong man? Is it the man of predominant muscle or the man of predominant nerve? Beyond a doubt, it is the man of predominant nerve. Strong muscle is a delusion and a snare. Often as not it leads a man to overdo his strength at some vital part. He overworks his heart, probably, or over-engages his lungs with blood or air, or stresses his veins that they grow varicose. He is always preaching the need of exercise; he takes longer walks than he needs; he over-cycles; he over-jumps; he over-runs, and, generally, he tends to overdo everything but thinking. In this last, he is rarely strong. Let him work at a problem in figures; he grows readily tired. Let him study a work of science; he falls asleep. Let him read the masterpieces of literature; he gets a headache. Unaccustomed to exercise the thinking parts of his brain, he leaves them to rust unburnished. In constant terror of losing his best form, he excuses himself from any but trivial activities.

Physical culture is the fashion of the present reaction; but it is receiving its proper check. It will wear itself out in a short time, and this new excuse for laziness will follow how many others to the waste-room of civilisation.

Not in this direction is the strong man to be found. The strong man is he that can combine physical labour in exhausting conditions with moral responsibility for the guidance of life in the family. The working man comes, on the whole, nearest to this ideal. He is a

type of strength, persistence, stability, duty. He rises early; he works long; he retires early. He has his wife and child there to preserve him from frivolity. He is often irritable, unkind to his fellows, foolish, drunk, caught by wrong winds of doctrine. But he is ever and always in contact with the grim realities of living and, as a rule, he masters them. From him we recruit every other order of society, which to live at all must in every generation be "recruited from the green earth." With all his disabilities upon him—and they are many—the worker is the strong man of our society. Whether he be the violent slogger of Newcastle, or the reflective weaver of Thrums, or a black-squadder on the Clyde, he carries with him everywhere the "promise and potency" of great issues.

THE WORKING MAN'S WIFE.

But nothing that can be done by the working man can be done without the working woman. She is in most cases the "stang of the trump." She may not always be clean, but she is almost always industrious. She may not always be respectful to her husband's domestic opinions; but she has the children for her daily burden. Usually, she makes the children's clothing; she keeps them constant in their school attendance; she assists their lessons; she reports their illnesses; she trains their characters. I know of no better ethical teacher than a good artisan's wife. She is always in touch with reality. She has manners; she has intelligence; she has foresight; she has a limited ambition. But often she runs under a heavy handicap. She interviews the factor when the drains are choked; she abuses him when he fails to repair them; she pays the rent, she pays the rates, she banks the wages in the friendly society. "I paid his society money for sixteen years, but he was aye ill and overwrocht. I fell back wi' the instalments, and now I'll

no get a penny." She was the widow of a hard-worked riveter, who had given himself a sacrifice for children and wife, dying of overwork at forty, and leaving his wife to continue the battle.

ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC DRUDGERY.

How shall we relieve the pressure of this domestic drudgery? Most troubles in the working man's house come from the care of a family.

To begin with, there are the children. The problem of the children has been in part solved already. The older of them go to school; they remain there for a fair proportion of the day; they come home again, or remain for a time on the street, and on the whole they are not too much of a burden to the weary and heavy-laden mother. But the children of less than school age? One is six months old and demands constant nursing. Another is eighteen months or two years old and demands constant supervision. A third is three and a half or four years old and is just capable of getting constantly into mischief. There may be others, but we shall rest at three. To do full justice to the life of one infant would require more than all the mother's energies, and she has to divide herself among three. Nor that only, she must prepare her husband's meals—at least three in the day. She may have a lodger, and she must prepare his meals—at least three in the day. She must feed the school-children—three times a day. She must wash, she must scrub, she must mend, she must buy, she must cook, she must bake, she must suckle the one baby and keep the other moderately clean and the third moderately safe, she must all day and most of the night give of her soul and body to the needs of others; but one thing she must never do, she must never fall out of temper, and she must never feel tired. Is it a wonder if now and again the brave heart begins to weary, and

the eyes to water, and the lips to pale, and the limbs to tremble, and the breath to come fitfully, and the stairs to grow heavy, and the body to grow thin, and the interests to grow narrow, and the desire of life to run low, and the world to be too much for her, and the very flesh at last to cry out for rest—"give us long rest or death, dark death or dreamful ease"? Is it any wonder if she ages and dies before her time? Is it a wonder if she gives the biggest contribution to the consumption death total—she that cannot venture into the air because she cannot carry the baby, and rarely sees the sun, because at best it is rarely to be seen and, for her, its rarity is yet more rare? Is it a wonder either if she has not completed her toilet by the time her afternoon slummers come and sit a little with her and touch the baby's cheek with a delicate hand and go away, glad to get into the open air again, and wondering how lazy and careless the working men's wives are nowadays and why they never seem to go out—even for a cycle run? Do we need any more to explain why the friendly societies are there? why the doctor is kept busy? why infection multiplies? and why even a slum grows tolerable to its inmate? It is not that they prefer darkness, and bad air, and perpetual labour; it is that the life they grow into is beyond their individual strength. They must go under; they do go under. What can we do to uphold them?

THE NEWHAVEN WOMAN.

Take a walk with me down to Newhaven. This young woman has lost her husband. He was a young fellow of good character—capable, steady, reliable. One night, on his way home from his nightwork on the railway, he dropped down ill. His companion ran to the nearest hospital; he was taken there and, on examination, he was found to be suffering from severe bleeding of the lungs. He was kept until he had recovered sufficiently to be sent home. A week later he took a

sudden bad turn and died. On hearing of his death, I called at the house. There I found some sympathetic neighbours, who had shown the young widow her duty. She was calm; she belonged to good people; she rested on the kindness of human sympathy. She took me to the room where her husband lay, telling me how he had died. There, in a room as clean and tidy as if it were in a palace, lay the dead man, covered over with sheets of spotless white—the last sacrifice on the altar of personal devotion. The baby smiled and kept to its mother, and all was peace and quietness and brave character. Later, I saw the young woman once more; but this time her dream had long gone by and she was once more the Newhaven fisherwoman—clean, powerful, foresighted, equal to the fate imposed upon her. It is with regret that one watches the covering over of that ancient and powerful people; the very houses are vanishing under our eyes; the individuality of race is invincible, but the individuals of it are becoming less and less numerous. But surely it is not hopeless to think that something of the fine energy of these people of the sea border might find a parallel in the streets farther inland, or must we, after all, accept the depressing conclusion that, as the freedom and risks of the sea made that great race of fishermen—strong, independent, competent, fatalistic—so the grinding monotony of the ordinary industrial life of the towns makes a race of feeble body, unsatisfied mind—hopeless, heedless, unstirred by any excess of the “will to live?” One cannot think of this as a permanent consequence of industrialism, even if it be for the time inevitable. In a town of varied occupations like Leith, all types are to be found—from the dejection of the dirtiest slum-labourer to the buoyancy of the full-blooded carrier from the Lothians. The continued infusion of fresh country blood is the salvation of the towns, and usually, though the incomers are deeply grieved at the town dust and dirt, they do, on the whole, maintain a higher

standard of management in their houses than the older generations of town dwellers. But even among the less vigorous of our people, the environment plays an enormous part, and I am satisfied that the energies of life can be organised to far greater purpose if only the fearful waste on a bad environment could be eliminated.

THE LIMITS OF THE HOME.

Some have suggested, in ridicule of our elaborations of social service, that we should remove the babies at birth and bring them up away from the parents altogether. The suggestion may shock our prejudices; it may seem to many the mere hare-brained nonsense of some strayed lunatic; yet from the standpoint of the State's welfare there is much to say for it. So long as the ordinary mother is so poorly educated, so ready to learn everything except the culture of children, so long will speculations like these gain in convincing effect. Plato—and he was among the wisest of antiquity—made this segregation of infants for the purposes of nurture and education a corner-stone in his rational republic. And we think twice before we dare say that Plato was neither philosopher nor statesman. It is certain that his notions would have been pointless had he not found in his day, as we find in ours, that the ordinary domestic influences, the influences glorified by the sentimentalists under the name of "home influence," were the worst fitted of all to prepare a man for the strenuous and dignified rôle of a citizen. Let us be under no delusion here. The best of homes can do but a part. A day comes—and it comes earlier in most lives than we usually assume—a day comes when the father's and the mother's experience is too old or too poor for the rushing mind of the boy or girl. Each in his way and in his degree must follow his own bent in development, and the home remains inadequate to the task of guidance. "Woman, wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business,"

is the sublime expression of a fact that is realised in every life, great and little. The question is not whether the home is inadequate; the question is at what point in the child's life it necessarily becomes so. When this is thoroughly understood, some consequences grow clear. The school is a necessity; the hospital is a necessity; the industrial school is a necessity; the reformatory is a necessity; the day nursery is a necessity; everything that increases the energy of the home by reducing the friction to be overcome is, from the standpoint of social progress, a necessity. As things are, the home ceases to be a home because it is overweighted with the squalid and the unworthy. Remove these by better external organisation, and the home at once has a chance of rising into the most intimate of social clubs. The home, as we know it, is rarely a fit place for the evolution of character.

Let us consider a few of these minor problems and the solutions of them.

OVERCROWDING.

One morning about five o'clock, it was my painful duty to visit a workman's house to inform his wife that he was dying in hospital. The door was opened by a child of five. She had risen from her temporary bed on the floor; she had been suffering from measles. In the other bed lay the mother and four other children, arranged as the accidents of coverings would permit; the oldest child was, perhaps, twelve, the youngest, a few weeks. Six people slept in the one room, and this is hardly to be called overcrowding compared with some cases I could give. This house, however, was the home of a respectable workman, who would have earned some 30s. or £2 a week steadily. Trouble had come upon him; health failed; the spirit had gone out of him; poverty began to take possession; then he died, and the mother with her six had to face the pitiless desert. In cases like these, where shall we begin with a remedy?

And they are to be counted by the hundred. Yet this brave woman has faced the desert, and she has not fainted by the way. The oldest girl has gone to some occupation. The others go to school. The baby is in hospital. The mother will, by the help of one institution and another, climb up again into the circle of efficient citizens; adversity has tried her and tempered her; it has not subdued her. If one could help her by the impersonal service of some institution to nurse her weakest from time to time, she would gain in energy without losing in effort; society would be a true providence, seeking no reward but the reward of renewed endeavour after new life.

Even overcrowding has its good side. The family of the working man is thrown so much together that the children instinctively cling to one another. Here, for instance, is a mother with five children. The oldest is about fourteen, the youngest is five months. One of them has German measles and a cough. Another has a sore throat. The mother is herself suffering from the bad weather. It is about ten in the morning. They have just risen—those of them that are able. The baby and the two patients are yet in bed with the mother. The father has gone early, but he will be home again in the evening. Squalor, do you say? Unhappiness? Not a bit of it. The baby is eyeing us all placidly; “she hath but wondered up at the white clouds.” The three-year-old at the bed-foot is gazing with newly opened eyes at the intruders. The oldest boy, half-dressed, is kissing his hand and snapping his fingers to the baby. The oldest girlie is exploding every second with laughter at this little wondering wonder. Even the mother, anaemic, depressed, smiles with them. The house is not yet cleaned; it may not be to-day; it is not tidy; the breakfast dishes are not cleared away; a stocking is lying here, a petticoat there; kitchen and bedroom are one and the same. Yet have we not here for the moment, could we but keep it, the very essence

of the ideal family—the romance of innocence, fresh love untouched with worldliness, spontaneous service, self-sacrifice, the will to live, the joy of life? In every family those moments come; perhaps among the poor they are more frequent than among the comfortable, where personal service becomes often too conscious of itself and passes into sentiment; but they come only to pass again, and the very problem we are seeking to understand is how to convert those sparks from heaven into the steady light of our every days.

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF OVERCROWDING.

Now, further, as to this overcrowding. Let us analyze a little. What amount of space does a healthy adult need to breathe in? To this no one answer is possible. But assume that we are thinking of a dwelling-house where a man may have to sit or move about for an average of three or four hours a night. To keep the carbonic acid of the fouled air down to 6 parts per 10,000, he will require about 3000 cubic feet of air per hour; in three hours he will need 9000 cubic feet. That is, if the room is 10 feet wide, 10 feet long, and 10 feet high, the air in it must be completely changed three times every hour. Most working men's kitchens are rather larger than this; but furniture reduces the available space. We may assume a room of 1000 cubic feet as a fair standard. But the man is rarely alone. There is his wife; there are the children; say, six persons in all. Often as not there is a stranger. Suppose we say that the room's average population will be, at a low figure, equivalent to five adults. As each adult requires 3000 cubic feet of air per hour, five will require 15,000 cubic feet. But we have omitted something very important. The house is lit with gas, and the gas burner consumes, say, five cubic feet of coal gas (mixed, I believe, with some so-called "water gas," or hydrogen and carbonic oxide) per hour. The gas pollutes the air as the human individual does. Each

cubic foot of coal gas burnt per hour is, roughly, equivalent in polluting effect to half an adult; five cubic feet will be equivalent to two and a half adults, or, say, in round numbers, three adults. We thus have, in our 1000 cubic feet, eight adults, each requiring 3000 cubic feet of air per hour, that is, 24,000 cubic feet in all. Air costs absolutely nothing; it is absolutely essential to life; yet where are these eight adults (five of them alive and three of them simply a gas burner) to get it? Not by the kitchen window, for it was shut as soon as the light went in and the blind went down; not through the door, which is kept shut to keep the neighbours and the cats and other children and thieves out; not by the parlour window, for that is open only once a week or so, for fear the rain might get in or the light spoil the carpet. If you stand up on a chair, after two hours of this "home life," you soon come down again, for the upper levels of the air are reeking with burnt gas and hot vapour. The baby falls asleep; the mother says it is because he has been out so much, and perhaps he *was* out an hour in the morning. The school children grow hot in the cheeks and dull in attention. They gradually grow drowsy and go to bed. The father and mother soon follow—wearied and yawning. Next morning the room is colder; the fire has gone out; they have breathed some of the air for the hundredth time; the father brushes himself up, gets out into the open air, lights his pipe and, by the time he reaches his work, he is positively fresh. The mother never gets out all day and never grows fresh. The children soon knock off the depression. But the baby gets the worst of it, he must wait until he is *taken* out. The windows at last are opened, and there is a temporary return to nature and sanity.

REMEDIES.

How are we to meet this? Without some modification in our bad habits of building houses we cannot

solve the whole problem. But it would not be difficult for architects to put a valve into the chimney to take away the foul air of the upper layers of the atmosphere. It would be easy to put an opening above the entrance door. It would be quite easy to put a board at the lower sash of every window in the house, so that the window would never quite close. The fire is always there and is the saviour of the household. It acts as the main ventilator. It will do all that is ever necessary, if it gets a chance. If only we could break down this superstitious horror of cold air, we might increase the personal resistance of every individual and diminish the perpetual accumulation of unhealthy materials. But, frankly, I trust more to our splendid gales and rainstorms than to the initiative of the working classes.

THE DAY NURSERY.

The day nursery is merely an extension of a practice already widespread. When a child falls ill of scarlet fever, it is readily enough removed to the fever hospital, because it is a danger to others and because it can be better treated away from home. When a child needs an operation, like tracheotomy, it is at once removed to hospital, because the home makes operating and the after-nursing very difficult and costly. When a child has a leg broken, or requires rickety legs to be straightened, he is willingly sent to a hospital, because surgeons will not undertake dangerous operations except in proper conditions, and these it is rarely possible to produce in the working man's house. In these instances, the principle is granted that, directly for the good of the community in some cases, for the good of the individual and the family, and, therefore, indirectly for the good of the community in others, a child may properly be removed for a period from the environment of its home to an environment more suited to its immediate needs. Instead of a sick infant, let us imagine a feeble, or a deserted, or widowed mother

whose opportunities of making a living are destroyed by a child too young to be left alone and too troublesome to be handed to a neighbour. Is that not a case for the day nursery? In Leith, the day nursery has relieved many a weary mother and, not infrequently, a weary father. The principle might well be extended. A woman's working day might be immensely economised if the necessity of perpetual attention to the infant were lessened. To those that fear the lapse of parental responsibility the reply is easy: the privilege gained may be paid for and, as a rule, is, in whole or in part, paid for.

The care of the infant is indispensable to the efficiency of the home. Not uncommonly when I visit infectious cases in houses, I find the patient in bed, and an infant of perhaps two or three. The baby is in the cradle or very often at the window where the sink is. It gets light there, and is handy for the mother as she is washing the dishes. Here it can breathe little dust, because the surfaces are usually moist; but it easily receives some spatters from the dirty dishes and, perhaps in that way, begins its taste for adult food. But surely this dirty and sloppy region is not the ideal seat for an infant, even if it sometimes be moderately clean. If the mother had sent her infant to the nursery she would have the charm of wishing for it all day—for mothers do normally long for their babies—and the ever-renewed emotion of receiving it at night. Many circumstances arise where a place to house babies, or infants under school age, would be of distinct service in the economy of domestic energies.

Perhaps a few details of the *Crèches*—the Day Nurseries—of Paris may not be without interest here.

THE PARISIAN CRECHES, OR DAY NURSERIES.

The *Crèches*, or Day Nurseries, of Paris, are not an ancient institution—at least in their present form. The Foundling Hospital for abandoned children is very

ancient. The Crèche is the institution that reduces the tendency to abandonment. For it is designed to relieve the bereft mother of the too heavy load that the earning of her own living and the simultaneous upbringing of an infant entail. Certain social theorists, whose ideas of social obligation are largely based on direct money returns, question the wisdom of nursing the infants of the poor. Two sides there are to the question, but not precisely the two sides usually assumed by the objectors. Here, however, I have no time to argue the case. I give only a few details of the Crèches.

From a small pamphlet on "The Work of the Parisian Crèches," issued by the Secretariat of the Sixteenth Arrondissement and describing two of the chief Crèches in Paris, I take the following:—

"Among all the works for the protection of infancy, the work of the Crèches is one of those that has made the most distinctive impression, that, perhaps, which gives the most appreciable results. It chiefly excels in this, that it allows the mother to work without separating her from her infant. Moralists and physicians are alike unanimous in declaring that the child has a right to the care of the mother, a right to her milk, a right to her love. The mother, unless it is an absolute impossibility, is therefore under the strict obligation to bring up her child. But this obligation, which is at the same time a pleasure, it is impossible for the poor mothers to fulfil without assistance. Many are burdened by the necessity of working away from home; then the little ones will remain neglected, suffering from want of care and exposed to the worst dangers. The Crèche opens wide to them its doors; it collects them, looks after them, feeds them, and clothes them. When the evening comes, the mother takes her infant again, fresh and well, and continues the maternal task that others have sketched out for her. The care that surrounds the infant does not stop at the door of

the Crèche. If it is ill, it is not admitted, because of the danger to others; but the lady patrons visit it, assure themselves that it wants for nothing, and give to the mother the advice of which, too often, her inexperience stands in need. Fortunately, these cases are rare; thanks to the precautions taken, the diseases of early infancy are reduced almost to nothing. We have made a great advance on the first homes where too many infants were crowded into a space too small, badly ventilated, and insufficiently cleaned. The establishments founded by 'Oeuvre des Crèches' are bathed with vivifying and pleasant light, water is generously distributed, pure air enters in full measure. Not only do they use nothing but sterilised milk; for fear that the want of precautions should prejudice the work so well begun, each mother whose child is not fed on the breast takes home the provision necessary for the night. One can say that for the whole time of its sojourn at the Crèche, that is to say, up to the age of three years, the baby costs its family nothing. But there is yet another thing; the poor mothers, who so often have bitter moments to traverse, are sustained, protected, consoled; they feel that they are not alone; and more than one, above all among the abandoned, has been saved from despair by so opportune an intervention. We shall appeal then to all those favoured of fortune to enable us to bring up a healthy and strong generation, to save the mothers from despair of life, to keep them from meeting on the streets their sad and starving offspring, to make their cheeks rosy, and to bring a smile to their lips."

These institutions are supported partly by voluntary subscriptions, partly from the public assistance. There are others directly under the management of the poor law organisations of Paris. But those I have described are intended for the large margin that lies between labour and pauperism. In that margin there is buried much good social material; every society would do well

to prospect there, and the organisation of the Crèche is one of the best instruments of discovery. I may add that the Crèche I visited this summer in Paris more than bears out all that is here said of the system. The French people have through all their history been great organisers; the Exhibition just closed, the greatest and most beautiful in all history, is there to prove it. For efficiency without display, for simplicity of management, for cleanliness, for the brightness and vivacity we would always associate with childhood, I wish to see nothing better than the Crèche at Auteuil.

But we are not so far away from this ideal as these words might suggest. You have only to go round to the Tolbooth Wynd to find there an excellently managed Crèche, which is keeping warm among the deserving poor their courage in the face of difficulties, and opening for many children a possible future in life. To the organisers of that day nursery, to the ladies and the doctors that superintend it, Leith owes the thanks due to the spirit of self-sacrifice and the insight of loving service. I do not mention particular names, but we know them all, and the most flattering praise is the bright light in an infant's eyes. We patronisingly say of France that the birth-rate has gone so low that they must conserve their social energies, they must keep alive their population. Let us not be too confident. The race is not to numbers, but to capacity, and, besides, our own birth-rate is following the birth-rate of France. The coming census will open our eyes to that. At any rate it will take much more than arguments like these to make us discard our social instincts and these later manifestations of brotherly feeling.

THE DAY NURSING SERVICE.

As a supplement to the day nursery, there is another possible service—the Day Nurse. Those that can afford it always employ a nurse to take the children for so many hours a day into the open air and sunlight.

Nothing can be better. But the working man cannot keep a nurse. Neither can his wife take out the perambulator regularly for the hours necessary to an infant's health. She has not the time; she has not, as a rule, the energy; she has, therefore, not the inclination. She lives in a stair, too, and that is always an added burden. Why should it be impossible to organise a service of young girls to act as nurses for a small sum per day? Here is an opening for any philanthropic person. One girl could manage many babies in the day. Even two hours in the free air and light would be more than the mass of infants now get. To take them out would mean dressing them; dressing would mean cleaning, for however dirty a baby may be at home, it must be clean if another mother is to see it; and cleaning would mean health. I have no great hope that any such suggestion will be anywhere adopted. But if the district nurse has become indispensable for sick adults and infants, I think it not unreasonable that the girl nurse might become at least desirable for the prevention of sickness. What is quite certain is this, the budding generations of the working classes rarely get the light, or the air that shall satisfy their physiological demands. Of the food, they usually have more than enough—if not always of the right kind. I am satisfied that a day nursing service could be made a paying reality. What at present falls to the oldest daughter would then fall to the Girl Nurse, whose experience of infants would be at least as profitable to her in after-life as the humdrum second-class domestic service that she usually drifts into. A Nursing Friendly Society for healthy infants has as sound a basis in a rational social economy as a Sick Friendly Society, and the results would, I am satisfied, be even more fruitful. One wonders why the enterprising insurance companies, who know the industrial classes so well, do not find it their benefit to prevent the awful slaughter among their insured

infants. It is at least worth inquiring whether huge companies like the Prudential could not, by a service of girl nurses, popularise their infantile insurance to an extent beyond their wildest dreams—and yet pay themselves.

WASHING.

Most houses, even of the better classes, prefer to send out their washing. The reasons are many. The work is disagreeable; servants grumble or refuse; and the organisation of laundries has now reached a stage when the saving of household inconvenience overbalances the losses of articles worn and torn. Machinery cannot do everything, but unquestionably laundry machinery and the service of trained hands made necessary by it can do well, a great deal that must be done. So far as the better classes are concerned, washing may be somewhat of an inconvenience; but it need be no great hardship. For every decent middle-class house has a wash-house and an installation of washing tubs. Bleaching, it is true, is in the towns pretty much a lost art. That is the penalty for our invincible gregariousness and inevitable soot. But in the working man's house there is real hardship. Sometimes he has a wash-house, oftener he has not. Even when he has, his wife cares little to use it, for she probably lives two or three stairs up; there is the baby to see to, the dinner to get ready, the fire to keep in, and these, added to the labour of running up and down stairs, makes the wash-house in the basement functionally useless. What is the result? The kitchen has a new function developed for it. Already it is a restaurant, a scullery, a bedroom, a children's nursery, a sitting room, a schoolroom, occasionally a sick room. It is now also a wash-house, a drying loft, and a laundry. Early in the morning the mother begins. Right through the day she continues. Well into the evening, there is the messing of soap suds and soda. The air reeks with washing odours and moisture. To

ask a man to sleep in a wash-house would almost be to tempt the police. But if the wash-house is also a restaurant, scullery, bedroom, nursery, drawing-room, and schoolroom, all without increase of space or diminution of furnishings, it becomes just the ideal sleeping place, the "home" of the free citizen! The parlour, furnished always after a very praiseworthy, if somewhat monotonous, ideal, is rarely used as a relief to the composite kitchen. The parlour is essentially a place for keeping the sofa covered, unread books and an album on the table, and the Sunday and funeral clothes in a chest of drawers. Almost never have I seen the ordinary working man use this room as an everyday part of the household. It is kept for strangers, a place for rare and choice occasions. But the reason for his not using it is more profound than a man's habits; it is that his wife will not let him. Even on washing days he keeps to the kitchen. That he can like it, is incredible; that he resents it, is probable; that he occasionally resigns himself to this orgie of cleansing, is possible. But I am certain he would, on the whole, prefer to see the washing done elsewhere. And that the case for public washing-houses has much to say for itself is already demonstrated by the experiments of large cities like Glasgow and Newcastle. There the mother, with her infant on one arm and the week's or fortnight's washing on the other, goes to the public wash-house; she pays for her booth; she has her wash-tub, her rinser, her soap, her soda, her drying-horse. She places the baby in the place provided for it. Her heavy things may be done in the washing-machines; her light things are done in the tubs. Her flannels she can do separately. Her linen sheets she can pass through the steam calender at the rate of one large sheet per minute. She can do the same with her towels, her handkerchiefs, and other such minor articles. The calender at once dries and mangles and irons, and all three more completely than can be done

at home in many hours of careful toil. Meanwhile the coarser articles are drying on the drying-horse. She bundles everything up, seeks out her infant, and goes home cleaned for the week. The house has not suffered; the dinner need not suffer; the husband may have his clean things at once, the children their clean pinafores, and all for a sum that would probably not pay for the washing-day coals.

To say that the public wash-house, as I have sketched it, and as you may see it at work any day in Glasgow, is not a distinct improvement on the present management of the working man's house is to insult common sense. The municipalities have full powers to provide public wash-houses, and I know nothing that would more improve the domestic amenity of the working man's house. Even if they did not pay completely, they are worth at least as much consideration as public baths, which almost never pay, and electric light which pays now and again. True, the baths are mainly for men, and electric light is also mainly a man's affair. Wash-houses are mainly the concern of women. The poor woman is less ready to organise, and therefore she remains longer the family drudge.

DUSTING.

Last week, Dr. Philip drove home convincingly the importance of not dusting rooms by any dry method. If you reflect for a moment, you must see the hopeless futility of the proceeding. Dust has weight, therefore it falls to the ground. But its weight is very small, therefore it readily rises again. So long as it lies, it does no harm to any one. Once it is set afloat again, it will keep floating for hours. The finer dust may float for days. Professor Tyndall showed long ago, in his beautiful experiments, that the very fine dust never settles; it is diffused in inconceivably minute particles through our air, and gives to the sky its blue, and to the sunset its panorama of purple and gold. To clear away

dust altogether, therefore, is a greater task than any of the labours of Hercules; it is a blank impossibility. But if we refrain from disturbing it, we fall behind our neighbours and people will say, "Your house is not clean." How shall we do? Convert your dust into mud and collect it carefully, and wash your dusters outside the room. Damp dusting may do some good if there must be dusting; dry dusting can do none. It merely increases the chances of inhaling the dust—the very opposite of what is intended. For the purposes of disinfection, we have a rapid method of converting dust into mud, and, as far as possible, sterilising the mud. I shall now show in operation one of our sprayers. We use it to spray into a room, on to walls, floors, ceilings, furniture, into presses, closets, crevices, under beds, chests, and other immovables, a liquid containing a strong disinfectant gas. The instrument I show you is for rapid and powerful work, but there are many small appliances to be had for a shilling or two that might be profitably used for the ordinary routine of house dusting.

(At this point a demonstration was given of the Equifex Sprayers used by the Leith Public Health Department.)

STORAGE OF FOOD.

Last year, Dr. Lockhart Gillespie laid down the guiding principles of food. Here I merely hint at the crude ways of keeping food. It is nothing to have the milk, butter, and meat stowed away in a press with vegetables and doubtfully clean clothing. The bath-room is not the place to keep perishable food; neither is an overcrowded kitchen. If the bottle-fed infant develops diarrhœa, or the older children some obscure stomach complaint, it is probably because the milk has become a pandemonium of evil microbes, or yesterday's soup has gone over to the same cause. The milk and the butter might at least be kept in a clean covered

place. The meat might be kept away from the unwashed vegetables. All three might be kept away from the sink, and soiled clothing is the last thing on earth to hang in a larder or a milk-house. Accommodation for food storage is not one of the things thought of in the building of a working man's house. The working man is not supposed to need things quite as nice as nicer people. And no doubt the absence of accommodation largely encourages those slovenly habits. None the less, the habits can be and ought to be altered.

THE CLEANING OF STREETS.

Everybody has his complaint about the refuse on the streets. Where does it come from? It comes largely from bad housekeeping. Ashes are unavoidable so long as we use coal; but papers are not unavoidable; garbage, vegetables, filth of endless descriptions are not unavoidable; for they can be burnt in the house fire without annoyance and without inconvenience. When I notice the amount of fish heads and unpicked bones and vegetable stocks thrown into the ash buckets, I wonder what kinds of minds the house people can have. For the sake of a little pleasant bother—I say pleasant, for to nine people out of ten it is a pleasure to burn a thing and be done with it—they chuck their filth out of doors that the raking cats and dogs and the dispersing infants may have a chance. For this there is absolutely no excuse whatever. One of the primary functions of a fire is to purify. At the very least, there is no excuse for throwing soiled paper on to the street. The chief sinners in this are the shopkeepers, who are well enough off to know better. If this vile example is set, what else is the working man's wife to do but imitate? It is well enough to come down heavily on the cleansing department, but a large part of the fault lies in the hands of the people themselves.

Even, however, if every combustible article were burnt, there remains on the streets themselves a vast amount of undesirable dirt. Our methods of collecting this are as yet not far advanced. It is nothing to see a rotary brush machine churning up the horse dung dust of the tramway lines on a dry and windy day. Usually the water cart goes in advance, but not always. Dry sweeping in a breeze is an ideal way of filling the houses with dirt. Over and over again I have noticed a scavenger carefully sweeping, with light touches, a heap of light refuse; most of it flies back over his brush; yet he, without surprise at the steady diminution of the pile, lifts the remnant into his barrow and passes on to repeat the farce. We may call this cleansing if we like; there is nothing in a name; I call it redistribution of dirt. Dry sweeping on the street is as futile a proceeding as dry dusting in the house. Fortunately, this wet year has given us absolution for our sins and the dirt has almost daily been washed into the sewer. And let me add this, there is no great use in blaming any department for this condition of the streets. Departments can work only within their powers and capacities. They will always respond, in some way, to complaints. It is for the people themselves individually and in their various organisations to complain, and if you are not willing to complain you merely deserve what you put up with.

A MINOR POINT.

There are many minor points that I might further detail, but time and patience forbid. There is spitting, for instance. But I know of no single way to stop it. Railway companies, tramway companies, and all such public concessionaries might do a vast deal to educate out the disgusting and indecent habit. A friend from India once spoke to me passionately about the abominable offensiveness and indecency of spitting. In India, he said, the children are taught that spitting is against

their caste, and from childhood they do not spit. On the other hand, some Indians clean their houses with dried cow dung; one bad custom balances another. It is true we dry the horse dung on the streets and float it into the houses by the window, and sometimes we do the same with the police refuse and even cow dung; but, when it is put to us, we don't mean it, and it is not enjoined on any but the "scavenger caste."

CONCLUSION.

Not long ago, I had to examine a ship about two in the morning. A man had been reported ill, and I found him seriously affected with lung and heart disease. On the ship, I found also a young man that had come on board in search of work. He was one of my old hospital patients. He became communicative. "How much do you make a week?" "I made £4 last week, and I may make £2 10s. off this job." "Every week?" "Oh, no, not every week, but I make a fair thing." "And your brother, how is he doing now?" "He's doing fine, too, but he takes bad to the booze. He likes to make the money to go on the booze. I'm the only one of the family that doesn't know the taste o' drink. I never drink." This, I had other reasons to believe, was quite true. Then we talked of other things. "I'm married, now," he said. "Married?" I asked in astonishment. "Yes," he said, and remained for a time silent. Later, he reverted to his marriage as if it needed some justification to me. "The reason I'm married, sir, is I had often to be after half-past ten when I got home from my work, and my folks said I wasn't to be disturbing *them* at that time o' night, and I wouldn't stay any longer in the house. But I didn't want to go near the lodging-houses; it's no' nice company for a young man, and I got married and have a house of my own. I'm only nineteen, and she's a year younger. That's why I married, sir, and we neither of us know the taste of drink." The noise of

our cab was the only noise on the street; the electric light was shining for us alone on that wet morning; he left me at his proper turning; I gave him words of encouragement and friendliness, and he answered to the touch of intimacy—a good youth, started on his path who shall tell whither? But there is the romance of social life, the mystery of society laid for an instant open, a home founded on the ideal of freedom and comradeship. If only we could preserve to the end that fine beginning, if the energies of middle life could be kept equal to the free confidence of youth, if the environment that he will have to fight against could but be made into an organisation to assist his moral growth, who shall say that, even for the poorest, an ideal home were not possible?



