

Third: Almsgiving increases far more than it diminishes the evils of tenement-house life. It is not the alms they need, but the education to meet the difficulties that lie within and about them. And these will yield only when men and women of intelligence and wise sympathy go among them and teach them to conquer themselves, give to them the ambition to be that of which they never dreamed—men and women thinking and planning for their own and their children's future, realizing their responsibilities as parents, and meeting these responsibilities with intelligence. Mothers' classes should be organized in every tenement-house square in our city. These classes should give lessons in cooking, sewing, and especially in mending and the cutting of cloth into garments. The women should be encouraged to bring their own materials, both old and new. Where the needs are pressing and alms must be given, let the garments be of suitable material, made and altered by the receiver if possible. There should be short practical talks on the value of money; the care, moral and physical, of children; the responsibility of a wife and mother; the reason for cleanliness of person and rooms. There should be on every square through our tenement-house districts provision for giving hot-and cold-water baths at all seasons of the year; also some provision for the care of infants, during the absence of the mother at work, that would not interfere with the attendance of the older children at school. The health laws concerning tenement-houses should be enforced, and the tenants made familiar with their rights and responsibilities as tenants.

Clubs should be maintained for the young girls and the boys employed during the day. The amusements and practical work introduced in each club should be such as will arouse and awaken the highest and best in the members. A few such clubs do exist, but they do not receive the support their importance demands. The clubs for girls should be organized in rooms similar in size to those they occupy as homes. One room should be fitted up in the simplest manner as a kitchen that could be used as a living-room by a family in their own circumstances. Here they should learn to use an oil-stove, that the discomfort of a tenement-house room in summer might be reduced. The girls should be made to understand that the aim of this life should not be the "having of a good time," but the fitting of themselves to meet future duties and responsibilities, that they may enjoy the blessings that come from knowing how to meet them.

No one realizes her deficiencies more than does the working-girl herself. Talking to a club of girls, I said: "Girls, why is it that so many whom we all know, just as pretty, just as trim as any of you, in two or three years after marriage are broken down, slovenly, unhappy? Why is it that the men they marry are as much changed as they are, and spend their time loafing and drinking when not at work?" A dead silence was the only answer. "Girls, do you know any who have so changed?" "Yes, indeed we do," was the answer given by several. "Shall I tell you the reason? It is because they did not know how to keep house. They were discouraged by their own ignorance, and became careless and slovenly because they were discouraged. The husband soon tired of the dirty, disorderly house and the slovenly wife, and found rest and entertainment out of it. Am I not right?" "Indeed

you are!" "What will make your future different from this?" "We'll learn what we should know." From that time on, whenever that club-room was open, you would find the members busy over little garments designed for one of the sanitariums at the seaside. As they worked some one read. During the winter practical talks, illustrated by the stereopticon, were given by physicians. Household matters were the subject of several talks; a library, which was used freely, was another means of good. Multiply this class of club by fifty, and you will have created a current that will revolutionize the lives of hundreds.

Boys' clubs, devoted to the instruction and entertaining of boys, that will open avenues of entertainment in themselves, should number, at least, one to five hundred of the liquor-shops that debase and ruin our boys. Entertainments to which fathers and mothers can come in company should be held at least once a month. Remember that with this class it is a rare thing for the husband and wife to spend an evening in company. Workingmen's clubs should be organized, where the members can meet and discuss the questions of the day with intelligent and educated men. It is time the workingman, whose opportunities for education are limited, received his instruction from some other source than a ward politician or a political demagogue, and in some other place than a rum-shop. Our recent elections have proved most conclusively that the workingmen are a force that will be felt more and more strongly every year. It is time that we recognized the fact that there are wards in every city where the non-taxpaying citizen outnumbers the taxpaying citizen by a hundred to one. These wards are peopled by the most ignorant, the most degraded of human beings. These are the citizens who make the criminal politicians of our time possible. It will take more than the jury system, or the punishments inflicted by law, to crush the heads of these political serpents. They retain their ill-gotten gains, and return to their little kingdoms crowned heroes.

Who is to change these conditions? The intelligent men and women who value the future of the city; who have a care for the children about their own hearthstone; who would save their children from contamination and the sure misery that must follow if this large and increasing class is left in the condition that our present system of education leaves them—either the wards of charitable benevolence, their very souls branded with dependence, or in the equally bad state of knowing their ignorance and their inability to conquer it, and consequently slowly sinking through discouragement to the level of brutes possessed of immortal souls, dragging with them the peace and happiness of the nation.

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#### The Prevention of Blindness in Infants.

ACCORDING to the census of 1880, there are about fifty thousand blind persons in the United States. Of these at least fifteen thousand have become so from a kind of inflammation that is likely to attack the eyes of a new-born infant. It is not claiming more than statistics justify to assert that not one of these fifteen thousand persons would have become blind had the proper measures been instituted at the right season. Ophthalmia neonatorum, or the sore eyes of the new-born, is a preventable disease. In those large hospitals where



the preventive measures first put in practice by Professor Credé, of Leipsic, are in force, the disease is practically stamped out. But, unfortunately, all infants are not born in a well-regulated hospital, and a very large number make their advent into the world under the superintendence of persons wholly ignorant of the gravity of this disease, and with no knowledge of the proper method of treating it after it has once been established.

The eyes of the baby from one to three days old become red and begin to discharge matter. The officiating person pooh-poohs the idea of its being a serious thing, says it is simply a cold in the eye, suggests some simple remedy,—the mother's milk usually,—and promises that it will be all right in a few days. In a certain number of instances that is the fortunate termination of ophthalmia neonatorum, for all cases are not of the virulent type; but they all begin in the same way, and at the outset of any case no one can foretell to which category it will belong. The disease going from bad to worse, the infant is finally taken, perhaps, to a competent practitioner, and the heartrending fact is revealed that it has come too late. An irreparable damage has been done — the cornea has ulcerated off, and the child is hopelessly blind.

But even more frequently the child is not taken to a doctor who understands the case until the acute inflammation has passed away, and then it is for the purpose of having the "scum" removed from the sightless eyeballs. Any one who has once seen the look of anguish in the face of one of these mothers when told that this cannot be done, and that her baby can never see, will never afterward regard babies' sore eyes as an insignificant affair.

It is not the purpose of this communication to consider the subject from a purely medical standpoint. There are, however, it must be confessed, many practitioners in good standing who are shamefully ignorant of the whole matter, and to their criminal negligence are due the sightless eyes of thousands of their fellow-beings. With them it will be left for the faculty to deal; and I am glad to say that in our colleges and clinics young men are now learning the proper method of dealing with such cases. But it takes a long time for knowledge to percolate in a professional way from the practitioner to the people, and particularly to the class of ignorant and poor among whom the disease, from various circumstances of environment, is most rife. Many infants among these people are never seen by a medical man at all, and when they are it is only in a cursory and casual way, and not once in a thousand times, perhaps, is the condition of the eyes examined into or inquired about. There is about the whole matter a state of ignorance, apathy, and indifference, against which science and humanity are having a hard struggle.

The readiest and most efficient way of meeting and overcoming this is to put a knowledge of the dangers of the disease in possession of the mothers, and of those having the care of new-born children. The public at large must be made aware of the irremediable evils that are likely to follow from the neglect of what has been regarded as a simple and innocent affection. One medium through which this knowledge can be extensively disseminated is the various charitable organizations, municipal and private, with which our country is so abundantly supplied. Let every society or or-

ganization which has to do especially with women, have printed and widely distributed among its people cards containing something like this:

If the new-born baby's eyes become red, and begin to run matter, take it *at once* to a doctor. This condition is dangerous, and may lead to total blindness.

By this means thousands of eyes that would have been lost will be saved. There is no need to appeal to the humanitarian sentiments of the readers of this magazine; a simple statement of the facts is sufficient, we are sure, to arouse their interest and enlist their cooperation in such a work.

But there is another aspect of the subject which, if somewhat narrower and on a lower plane, is yet of no mean importance from the standpoint of political economy. Every child becoming blind in infancy is henceforth, so long as it lives, a charge upon the community. Instead of being, as it should be, a producer, it is a consumer only; or at least its production, even in the most favorable cases, is only a tithe of what it would have been had the individual possessed good vision. The total loss to the commonwealth of our nation from this source reaches proportions which are astonishing from their magnitude. A very simple calculation will show how very large this is.

The minimum cost of sustenance of a single person in our best and most economically managed institutions for the blind is about \$132 a year. The cost of the "keep" of these fifteen thousand blind people is, therefore, nearly two millions of dollars annually. But these people, if they had not been blind, would have been contributors instead of an expense to the community, and their net contribution to the general fund can be taken as at least one dollar a day on the average. Adding this to the cost of maintenance, we have the total loss to the commonwealth of seven million five hundred thousand dollars each year, and this takes no account of those made partially blind by the disease, and who are thus handicapped in the race of life.

In some countries of Europe the state has taken the matter in hand, and has made it compulsory on the attendant to report at once to the proper medical authorities all infants whose eyes show signs of being affected. In spite of earnest petitions Great Britain has refused to take any official notice of it. In this country three States at least have taken definite action in the matter. Two years ago the legislature of New York passed an ordinance making it compulsory on the attendant to report all cases at once to the sanitary authorities, and Maine and Rhode Island have within the year followed her worthy example. Several other States have, I believe, the matter under consideration. All this is good and necessary, and should be made universal; but of what advantage are statutes if the people are unaware of the danger? In some way or ways we must let them into the knowledge of what babies' sore eyes may mean. One method I have suggested, but there are others which will occur to some of the many thousand readers of *THE CENTURY*. And still further to increase the spreading of the facts, I trust that the newspapers of the country will publish so much of this communication as shall embody the essential idea of the great danger of the disease when left to itself or under improper care and treatment.

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