THE EVILS OF HOTEL LIFE FOR CHILDREN.

In the rush to the South, during the winter, whole families migrate—and it is a never-ending surprise to see how many discomforts and disagreements those flocks of travellers will put up with in the seclusion of a hotel the which they seem to think is unobtainable nearer home. Of late years the custom of taking children on these yearly expeditions seems to have much increased, and these few notes on the evils of hotel life for children may be of interest to those who contemplate taking their little ones to spend some weeks or months in the Sunny South. These notes were made during a long stay in many hotels on the Riviera, when I had endless opportunities of observing "the manners and customs" of large numbers of these unfortunate hotel children.

Children, at an age when they ought to be forming habits for life before their health is in a manner, are baulked, as the cushioned or the cushioned nursery, where maids, cousins, and children, have the equally wholesome fare which their elders and betters are enjoying above. Perhaps the unwholesomeness of the fare is compensated for in their parents' eyes by the educational advantages they must gain from the conversation going on around them, and from the knowledge that at three or four years old they are cultivating a discriminating taste for champagne and maids and maids being in this respect a little better served than their masters. In many cases it is probable that the mother is the last person who will find out of what the children's dinner consists on these occasions, but, surely, if misfortune obliges her to bring her children abroad, her duty would oblige her to see that they were cared for, both physically and mentally. Rich people travelling with "children and sail" and engaging as often as not the best salons in the house for their private use, are quite awake to the fact that by sending the "children" (including their children) to dine in company with other "suites" a perceptible difference will be noticeable in their weekly bill without having themselves suffered any inconveniences from the economy.

A lady having written to the manager of a large hotel to arrange prices for a prolonged stay for herself, her husband, her little girl, and the governess, was surprised to find at the end of the first week that her bill was nearly twice as high as she had been led to expect.

Reverting to the beseech the sentence introduced the
autocrat, who calmly replied, "You desired that your daughter and her governess should dine with you in the suite à manger." "Well," said the lady, "and how does that affect the terms of the contract?" "Nothing," came it. "Of course, madam," was the answer, "I took it for granted that the governess and child would dine with the waiters and maids. Under these circumstances the less objectionable terms were clearly the only way out of the difficulty for the amiable and indignant mother. Were there not, therefore, travelling mothers and the like, might it be worth an hotel manager's while to add a third "suite" to his public rooms, viz., a children's dining-room, such as there is on board ship, a steamer, where a good wholesome nursery dinner could be served to the children and their guardians; where a leg of mutton and simple puddings should take the place of a lunch or dinner of four or six courses, and where the children, at least must be as eating and thinking is concerned, should continue to lead the whole-house life to which we have become accustomed at home. But as long as parents are content to save a few francs a day at their children's expense, and are awed unluciful of their little beings by the manager or owner of an hotel be "plus royal que le roi.

Of course there are so many ways in which money is saved when children, that any saving such as we have mentioned must be considered.

The same children who are grudging the money which would secure for them a lifeline of wholesome surroundings are clothed in purple and fine linen for fear of any discredit being reflected on their owners, and there are few more pathetic sights in existence than the smartly dressed hotel children sent out to play in the garden, and watched not only by maids and their friends, but also by a jester or two in the shape of a nurse, who has her eye not so much on her charges as on the clothes of her charges. "Baby, dear, you won't pick up a stone, or you will soil your gloves there, put it down, dear, and don't sit down on the ground," as baby, deprived of one amusement, and thinking, no doubt, that nurse's attention had now turned to her. The white suit,bethought her, the number of sitting down by the side of her little bucket and filling it with stones, scraped up with a diminutive spade, hands being forbidden. But the white frock was now in danger, and baby was set on her legs and the spade confiscated. Occupation number two was forbidden, and it went on. One thought of the time-honoured legend in Punch when Ethel is bidden to "go and see what baby is doing; and tell him he is not to," and only wondered how long it would be before the temper of this fairy-like little apparition in the white-silk frock and sunbonnet would be ruined. A few hours romping in unspoiled health would soon make the number of weeks of this so-called "play" to these luckless and trim little mortals.

And how unholiday-like—how silly is unknown, how to conciliate the acquaintances in a manner which would make one smile were it not so pathetic. To talk to these small people, or pet animals is to cause them to look at you with a reproachful look as though they were wondering what manner of person you could be, and what language you were uttering. They know all about their travels, where they have been, when they are "going on," how they like the hotel, what they think of the food and the wine, and their friends, and can tell you many children when their lives are stripped of all that makes a child's life worth living? And what do they gain in exchange for the loss of a free life? Not long ago talking to a small boy of ten, who ought to have been at school learning cricket, if nothing else, I ventured to inquire whether he had ever been in an hotel. He paused for a moment, and then informed me was his intention—it might perhaps come in useful. Also, I added, you may never have such a good opportunity again. He, a great deal, as being worth doing business with in New York, who can't speak German or English, he retorted. These were the two languages with which he had been familiar from babylhood, and with the help of which he intended making his way in the world. Months spent in France, and months in Italy had taught him not one word of French or Italian.

But so many tales are told of the independence and precocity of American children that one ceases to be surprised at fresh instances of it.

What comes upon us with a shock is to realise that as regards this precocity and unchildlike English children are becoming painfully like their American cousins. For fact, we, too, are in great danger of losing our children, and substituting for them these queer little puppies with the manners of the world. What can be expected of a little girl who at three years old is brought down to a long seven o'clock table d'hôte dinner, and who, in order to fit her for gaieties, which may be going on afterwards, demands regularly her cup of black coffee "to wake me up," as the poor rate is expected to wake her up. Night after night during a long stay under the same roof have I gone upstairs at ten o'clock leaving this white-faced, white-fered, baby, still awake—still chattering amongst a crowd of grown-up people in the brightly-litened salons. Will she ever rest or ever have one hour of wholesome sleep or play? People talk much of the "well-balanced life," led by the children employed in the pantomimes at Christmastime. The excitement of such a life, it is said, units them for settling down in after years, and the glamour of the stage blinks them for ever to the interest of ordinary occupations, and their lives are often ruined. What a valuable and ornamental life... Now imagine the months of stage life in one instance and the months of hotel life in the other. In one case the children are taken from poor and cramped homes, they are subjected to discipline and healthy exercise. Singing and dancing are natural pleasures to children, so that their work is their pleasure. Their education is continued, in many cases, at a theatre-school, whereby unnecessary fatigue is saved, and against these advantages are to be weighed the disadvantages of the excitement and late hours. Yet more advantages are mentioned. It is asserted by doctors that in cases of severe illness the theatre-children, since the health of the child, the patient of the poor, have the best chances of recovery—the happiness and brightness brought into their lives doing more towards a cure than anything else. So much for the卫生 benefits of a theatrical life, but in case children are taken from comfortable and specially-arranged nurseries to hotel rooms where there is no space is paid for almost by the inch. I have heard of a small, stuffed dog as day and night nursery for a nurse and her two little charges for months at a time. They are not, I believe, little or no play, for their free time is often employed in being taken for excursions which they rarely care...
about, and which generally overtake and upset them. Their education is neglected, insomuch as lessons are given spasmodically instead of regularly. In the garden, or in the public schools, children are often to be found "doing their lessons" under what, to both child and teacher must be almost insurmountable difficulties—perpetual coming and going, and ceaseless chatter. At other times the poor little victim may be found fighting alone with French exercises or Latin verbs, while "papa" or "amma" are having a walk.

Again, would-be readers and lovers ofquiet are distracted by the patient practise of scales and exercises in the public rooms. The excitement and the late hours are equally applicable to both cases; but in the second case we must not forget that unwholesome living (especially accustoming children to the habitual use of wine) is to be added to these two evils.

If the months of theatre life strike some people as undesirable, how much more undesirable must the months of hotel life appear. How will a quiet home life with its ordinary occupations strike girls brought up from infancy to the excitments arising from this public life. They are "Mad" at six years old, and accomplished flirts at ten. What will the discipline of school do for boys whose earliest ideas have been gathered from foreign waiters, valets, and hotel managers, and who prefer eraser to gingerbread.

As I write I have in my mind a scene I witnessed only last year, evening after evening, for several weeks. Between his parents at the dinner-table sat a little boy not yet promoted to knickerbockers. Solemnly he went through the long dinner, duly demanding a tooth-pick to be handed to him after the joint, and alas! having his champagne-glass duly looked after by the admiring waiter. Night after night was he carried from the room at the end of a supper, often with quavering attempts to walk alone, and on more than one occasion have I come across him lying half-stupified on the stairs or fighting violently with the nurse who was endeavouring to get him to bed.

But enough examples have been given to prove that cruelty to children may take a form which cannot be dealt with by any society, but which may yet effectually destroy the present happiness, and ruin the hereafter of many of the children who happen to be living in the lap of luxury. "Charity begins and ends abroad," is the nineteenth-century version of the old saying that "Charity begins at home." Much thought and more money are expended in schemes for the well-being of the "ne'er-do-well," and to be thoroughly wicked or thoroughly disreputable is to possess the "open sesame" to all the good things of this world.

Meanwhile much thought as to the welfare of many of the children of these same charitable folk is an impossibility—the poor demanded all one's time. Children who happen to be the property of poor or impossibly parents dearly deserve the first consideration. These children are to be forcibly taken from the sphere into which, as we used to be taught in an old-fashioned catechism, "it has pleased God to call them," and to be boarded out or received in institutions where they will have a happy and child-like education, together with a liberal allowance of toys and cakes and holidays in the country or at the seaside. The question of providing all this for other people's children is generally asked for in the name of your own little ones. So while on the one hand the lot of the children of the "masses" is being made every day more happy and luxurious, while endless new schemes are forthcoming to relieve their parents from all responsibility connected with them (for the mere fact that such and such parents possess more children than there is any possibility of being able to keep alive, let alone clothe and educate, is the surest passport to the favour and the purse of these sentimental beggars of other people's goods); on the other hand the children of the richer classes seem to be every day less considered.

The children of the lowest classes are eagerly sought for, and to pay for their maintenance and education is fast becoming a fashionable curse.

The children of parents well-off, from a monetary point of view, often have far less thought and no more care expended on them than these little arabs. Once more it must not be forgotten that unless the welfare of the latter is looked after by their lawful guardians it will be looked after by no one. In this respect they are decidedly worse off than the former.

No—the children of the well-to-do are equally dependent on their parents, and surely a very little thought and a very little experience would prove that if the children of the street must have their toys, and their games, and their "child-like life," so also ought the children of the well-to-do, who are now so often deprived of their childhood and made old and terribly wise by the publicity and unwholesomeness of their lives. Hotel life, above all else, kills child-life as surely as the hot-houses kill the wild roses.

A PIT-BROW LASSIE.

CHAPTER I.

In ever you wander through the busy mining and manufacturing portions of that busiest of counties, Lancashire, you will doubtless find many girls of the class and type of the one I am about to describe—girls who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, independent of male support, and who think they have as much right to their own opinions and ideas as Queen Victoria, with all her regal power. Outward servility is unknown to the Lancashire pit-brow lasses.

Rachel Stowe was a tall, stalwart maiden with ruddy cheeks, bright black eyes, and arms that would have put to shame many a masculine limb. Hard labour had developed Rachel's muscles and rendered a blow from her hand a thing undesirable, as several of her friends could testify. Rachel possessed a hotly temper, and generally avenged insults with her fist or foot. The girl had many faults, but some exception should be taken to her conduct, when it is considered that her mother was a coarse, swearing shrew, her father a drunkard, and from earliest infancy she had been nurtured in the lap of poverty and cruelty, had language and blows being her daily portion. But in spite of the evils of her environment Rachel thrrove in body if not in spirit, and at the age of nineteen she could earn from one and eight pence two to shillings a day. Her work was dirty and not very agreeable, but still Rachel was tolerably happy, for she knew no different sphere and possessed no aspirations after a higher mode of living. If she ever heard of her more favoured and delicately nurtured sisters, a snee would come over her face and she would exclain scornfully, "Oh, they are grannies!"

Rachel in her working costume and Rachel in her swept away all the different personages. On Mondays she wore skirts which just reached below her knees, short trousers, dark hose with never a wrinkle (for whoever saw a pit-brow lassie with neatly ankles?) and clogs. Over her head a dark shawl was fastened which held across her brow a smaller scarlet one to protect her hair from the flying coal-dust.

On Sundays the coal-dust was washed away and Rachel's face shone bright and smiling. Her hair was tangled into a huge frizz above her brow, and a cardinal gown, ill-fitting but brilliant, took the place of the short skirt and trousers. A large hat, resplendent with a white feather and arre ribbons, completed a costume which at least was conspicuous.

In spite of many inconsistencies and much that was repulsive, Rachel had a true heart, and to avail Nellie Brown, who saw the diamond beneath the coal-dust, she was a gentle and considerate friend. Nellie suffered from a special complaint, as to use her mother's word, a "spine iv'er back," and lay long, weary hours upon her bed a burden to herself and those around her. The poor have not much time to nurse, and know very little of the thousand and one attentions which help to make a sick bed easier.