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MORNING SESSION.

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TENEMENT HOUSE INSPECTION.

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Because so little is done to teach people in their homes how to better their condition, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you about my work in the tenement-houses as Sanitary Inspector.

While not every city has a tenement-house problem, every city has a housing problem, and it is the duty of the Board of Health to see that the homes of the working-classes are made at least healthful.

Organisations of public-spirited citizens should be formed, which, after acquainting themselves with local conditions, would revise building and sanitary codes and see to the enforcement of laws. Already this is done in New York, too late, to be sure, to eradicate the evil which a tenement-house is,—it is here to stay,—but an organisation of men and women can do much to improve the homes of the poor. To be able to cope with such a problem, a thorough knowledge of existing conditions is essential. A house-to-house inspection will reveal, aside from existing facts, the wants and needs of the people.

Having been a tenement-house inspector for over four years, I am able to speak of the need and benefit of such work. It touches the people in their homes, and their lives can often be made brighter by helpful sympathy. From year to year it is harder for the poor man to live, and the daily complaint is that he cannot find rooms.

Twenty-five years ago the Chief of the Department of Health in Glasgow realised the need of women inspectors in connection with the Health Department, as only women could deal with women effectively, and ever since that time the work has been done there by women health visitors, as they are called.

The larger cities in England have followed the example of Glasgow, and there are several sanitary institutes in England, where men and women are graduated to do the work of sanitary inspectors.

Several years ago in Chicago the Board of Health appointed women to inspect factories, sweat-shops, and tenement-houses, and five years ago Yonkers first had a woman tenement-house inspector, and it is almost two years since I was regularly appointed by the Board of Health, and I can say without vanity that in no city is the work

done so effectively as in Yonkers, because the qualifications which a nurse has enables her to do better than the average woman.

It would take too long to detail the combat gone through to get the appointment.

Landlords, politicians (members), and employes of the Board of Health all fought against the woman inspector, and but for the members of the board and one brave woman, Miss Mary Marshall Butler, president of the Civic League and Woman's Institute, who overcame all opposition, the appointment would not have been successful. After passing a civil-service examination the appointment was made, and in February, 1900, I commenced my duties as an employe of the Board of Health, as formerly I had done the work for the Civic League.

I will pass over the difficult task of working with the same people that fought so hard not to have me, and will only say that those same men are my best friends at present, and agree with the secretary, who said: "How did we ever get along without our woman inspector?"

The Health Officer said that he would like to have one woman inspector to every 25,000 inhabitants. The president of the board said that the moral influence of a woman inspector in the department had been very beneficial. All this I say to show that the work has been appreciated by friend and foe, and the need demonstrated.

In our beautiful Terrace City such bad conditions were revealed as to shock the whole community. Tenement-houses in Yonkers compare favourably with those elsewhere; we have all the evils of New York slums, only on a smaller scale. As a large proportion of our population lives in tenement-houses, the need for improvement was great.

The average tenement-house has deprived the people of light, air, and privacy; it has dark bedrooms, with sometimes the worse than useless air-shaft opening into a common hall,—a hall which, on entering, sends a chill through one's bones; as a rule, it is not ventilated, is very dark, unventilated toilets open into it, and the damp cellar air, and odours from cooking and toilets which greet one on entering are overpowering.

I begin my work in the cellar, much to the surprise of the people, who have neglected to clean it, and stored all sorts of rubbish away in it. As a rule, that most important part of the house has also been neglected by the builder, light and air have not been provided for, and after a rain-storm it is very often flooded.

Right here I begin to inspect the plumbing, and unless the house is new the pipes in construction are generally defective. I have to get a light to do this. When I go to the upper floors, the living rooms over the cellar are damp also and very un-

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