

ancient vigour. Where we find physical degeneration it is usually due to our own fault. The report says: "Even in the poorer districts in large towns there is a marked upward tendency, physically and educationally." This amazing vitality will push through wherever the barest opportunity is given it. It never need fail us. "Why and where then does it fail? Simply where we refuse it opportunity. Neglect, poverty, ignorance—these account for it." What says the Report? "Physical infirmity is practically confined to the lowest and poorer strata of the population." And why? "Because the children are improperly and insufficiently fed, and inadequately housed, or the parents are improvident, idle, and intemperate." When we hear this, are we still so proud of ourselves, so self-satisfied? It is plainly telling us that we, as a nation, are responsible for the enfeebled frames and half-developed children that fill us with misery. These infirmities are due to causes that can be removed. "These children are suffering under conditions which explain all. They are being improperly fed and inadequately housed." Let me quote the Report again:—"All evidence points to active rapid improvement, even in the worst districts, so soon as they are exposed to better circumstances, even the weaker children recovering at a later age from the evil effects of infant life." "There is little to show that heredity plays any significant part in establishing the physical degeneracy of the poorer population. There is, on the contrary, every reason to anticipate rapid amelioration of physique so soon as improvement occurs in outward conditions, particularly in regard to food, clothing, overcrowding, cleanliness, drunkenness, and the spread of common knowledge of home management." Surely the last sentence out of the Report is one that all nurses—lovers of their country, distressed for their country; children, eager for their country's progress—would do well to read, mark and learn. *Every woman has influence. Every nurse, in her own little sphere, has a special influence.* Perhaps no one has greater opportunities for good among the poorest and most degraded of our people, and when she enters the houses of the well-to-do she has a special opportunity of interesting those among whom she finds herself in the vital questions of housing, of over-work, of poverty, that they may be ready and anxious to help forward the necessary reforms as legislators, landlords, and as individuals.

The Race is all right. It is we who are wrong. We stand in the way of its attaining its natural growth and health. What are we doing to sweep away the slums, to work in the cause of the decent, healthy housing of the working classes, of the feeding of the children, the employment of the women, the recreation of all ages? The Report says: "Overcrowding still stands out most prominent in its prejudice to health, with its attendant evils of uncleanness, foul air, bad sanitation. Overcrowding

is the great cause of degeneracy. Crowded homes send men to the public house. Crowding is the main cause of drink and vice. The evil is, of course, greatest in one-roomed tenements, the overcrowding there being among persons usually of the lowest type, steeped in every kind of degradation and cynically indifferent to the vile surroundings engendered by their filthy habits, and to the pollution of the young brought up in such an atmosphere. The general death-rate in these tenements in Glasgow is nearly twice that of the whole city, and the death-rate from pulmonary tuberculosis is 2.4 per 1,000 in one-roomed tenements, 1.8 in two-roomed tenements, and 0.7 in all the other houses." The infant death-rate is found to exactly follow the increase of over-crowding in tenements.

Three centuries ago this judgment was delivered:—"In 1598 the Privy Council addressed a letter to the Justices of Middlesex, inveighing against the owners of tenement houses for the abuses they encouraged; 'the remedie whereof cannot be sufficientlie provided in havinge an eye to these persons that take those howses, being so great a number, and they cannot be justlie corrected untill they be taken with some offence, but in severe punyshinge those landlords that lett out those small tenements unto unknowne and base people and from weeke to weeke, not regardinge what the persones are that take the same, but to rayse a vile and unconscionable lucre.'" The present Report reports this verdict in modern language. "Facts like these show where the root of the mischief lies, and surely the time is ripe for dealing drastically with a class that, whether by wilfulness or necessity, is powerless to extricate itself from conditions that constitute a grave menace to the community by virtue of the permanent taint that is communicated to those who suffer under them, and of the depressing effect that the competition of these people exercises on the class immediately above. The Committee think that with a view to setting a term to these evils the Local Authority should, in the exercise of their power to treat 'any house or part of a house so overcrowded as to be dangerous or injurious to the health of the inmates as a nuisance, and for the abatement of the same, notify that after a given date no one-roomed, two-roomed, or three-roomed tenements would be permitted to contain more than two, four, or six persons respectively. The change might be brought into operation gradually, so as to treat the worst cases first, and render it easier to provide for the displaced families, but, in every case handled, it must be made plain that in the event of non-compliance recourse would be had to the compulsory closing of the tenement in question."

Thus we learn our great responsibility. The Race will thrive as ever, except where we ourselves forbid it. "If we will but better the conditions, we need no longer talk of physical deterioration, of stunted bodies, of degraded blood." Even in the

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