

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—It is one of my rules in life not to believe a man who may happen to tell me that he feels no interest in children. I hold myself bound to this principle by all kind consideration, because I know, as we all must, that any heart which could really toughen its affections and sympathies against those dear little people must be wanting in so many humanising experiences of innocence and tenderness, as to be quite an unsafe monstrosity among men; therefore I set the assertion down, whenever I happen to meet with it—which is sometimes, though not often—as an idle word, originating possibly in the genteel languor of the hour, and meaning about as much as that knowing social lassitude, which has used up the cardinal virtues and quite found out things in general, usually does mean. I suppose it may be taken for granted that we, who come together in the name of children, and for the sake of children, acknowledge that we have an interest in them; indeed, I have observed since I sat down here that we are quite in a child-like state altogether, representing an infant institution, and not even yet a grown-up company. A few years are necessary to the increase of our strength, and the expansion of our figure; and then these tables, which now have a few tucks in them, will be let out, and then this hall, which now sits so easily upon us, will be too tight and small for us. (Cheers and laughter.) Nevertheless, it is likely that even we are not without our experience, now and then, of spoilt children. I do not mean of our own spoilt children, because nobody's own children ever were spoilt—(laughter)—but I mean the disagreeable children of our particular friends. (Laughter.) We know by experience what it is to have them down after dinner, and, across the rich perspective of a miscellaneous dessert, to see, as in a black dose darkly, the family doctor looming in the distance. (Much laughter.) We know—I have no doubt we all know—what it is to assist at those little maternal anecdotes and table entertainments, illustrated with imitations and descriptive dialogue, which might not be inaptly called, after the manner of my friend Mr. Albert Smith, the toilsome ascent of Miss Mary, and the eruption (cutaneous) of Master Alexander. (Laughter.) We know what it is when those children won't go to bed; we know how they prop their eyelids open with their forefingers when they will sit up; how, when they become fractious, they say aloud that they don't like us, and our nose is too long, and why don't we go? And we are perfectly acquainted with those kicking bundles which are carried off at last protesting. (Cheers and laughter.) An eminent eye-witness told me that he was one of a company of learned pundits who assembled at the house of

a very distinguished philosopher of the last generation, to hear him expound his stringent views concerning infant education and early mental development, and he told me that, while the philosopher did this in very beautiful and lucid language, the philosopher's little boy, for his part, edified the assembled sages by dabbling up to the elbows in an apple-pie which had been provided for their entertainment, having previously anointed his hair with the syrup, combed it with his fork, and brushed it with his spoon. (Renewed laughter.) It is probable that we also have our similar experiences, sometimes, of principles that are not quite practice, and that we know people, claiming to be very wise and profound about nations of men, who show themselves to be rather weak and shallow about units of babies.

"But, ladies and gentlemen, the spoilt children whom I have to present to you after this dinner of to-day are not of this class. I have glanced at these for the easier and lighter introduction of another, a very different, a far more numerous, and a far more serious class. The spoilt children whom I must show you are the spoilt children of the poor in this great city—the children who are, every year, for ever and ever irrevocably spoilt out of this breathing life of ours by tens of thousands, but who may, in vast numbers, be preserved, if you, assisting and not contravening the ways of Providence, will help to save them. (Cheers.) The two grim nurses, Poverty and Sickness, who bring these children before you, preside over their births, rock their wretched cradles, nail down their little coffins, pile up the earth above their graves. Of the annual deaths in this great town, their unnatural deaths form more than one-third. I shall not ask you, according to the custom as to the other class—I shall not ask you, on behalf of these children, to observe how good they are, how pretty they are, how clever they are, how promising they are, whose beauty they most resemble—I shall only ask you to observe how weak they are, how like death they are! And I shall ask you, by the remembrance of everything that lies between your own infancy and that so mis-called second childhood, when the child's graces are gone, and nothing but its helplessness remains,—I shall ask you to turn your thoughts to *these* spoilt children, in the sacred names of Pity and Compassion.

"Some years ago, being in Scotland, I went with one of the most humane members of the humane Medical profession, on a morning tour among some of the worst-lodged inhabitants of the old town of Edinburgh. In the closes and wynds of that picturesque place—I am sorry to remind you what fast friends picturesqueness and typhus often are—we saw more poverty and sickness in an hour than many people would believe in a life. Our

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