

only quote the following statement made publicly by Mr. HENRY C. BURDETT, on October 10th, 1888, with regard to the intentions of his Insurance Office:—

“The Articles of Association even included provisions for establishing a Register in case the other organizations, which were attempting to institute a Register for Nurses (*i.e.* the R.B.N.A.), should not be able to carry their scheme through to success. The Fund itself thus had the power, although it had no desire or intention, unless it was compelled to exercise it, to establish a Register, and to take care that even that branch of the work was not neglected or allowed to fall to the ground.”

STREET TORTURE.

WHY has not the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children taken up the cudgels on behalf of the miserable little victims who are cradled on the handles of some of the street organs? Surely, not one word can be said in favour of such a practice; and if the parents or *hirers* of these poor little babies are so brutally ignorant as to be unaware of the shocking cruelty they are perpetrating, it is time the law stepped in and taught them. No sane adult man or woman can, after a little sober thought, have any doubt as to the effect on a baby's brain of close proximity to such a hideous jar of tortured sound, as that of a piano-organ. Investigations on two occasions proved the little creatures to be absolutely deaf, and that no doubt accounted for the placid faces of both infants. It stands to reason that if the noise of incessant hammering on boiler-plates can make so many of our iron-workers deaf, incessant noise of organ hammers on the delicate brain of a baby must either produce idiocy or deafness. The following cutting from the *Globe* speaks for itself, as to what going out with an organ meant for one baby at least:—

“A crippled street organist named Horner left his lodgings at Deptford on Saturday, accompanied by his wife, and having their eight months' old child in a box upon the handles of the organ cart. The weather was bitterly cold, and while Horner was playing at New Cross Gate, his wife discovered that the child was dead. It had expired half-an-hour before.”

The piano-organ business is a very cruel one at best, and it ought to be within the scope of the County Council to deal with and put an end to it. The police are kind enough as far as their power goes, but it is not much that they can do to protect the ordinary householder from the misery of these increasing plagues. There are certain neighbourhoods in London where the sound of these organs is in the air the whole of the day, from nine or so in the morning to ten at night. As soon as one leaves off, another begins,

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and sometimes two will play one against the other. For nervous and sensitive people, invalids, those who have to write a great deal, or who earn their living by their brains, the torture, for it is that, is insupportable; and it is only a small mercy that is granted the sufferer under the Metropolitan Police Act, by which for reasonable cause a householder or his agent may order them out of sound of hearing.

For one thing, it is so perturbing a process to have to get up from one's writing to go out into the street and stop an organ, that the interruption of thought is sufficient to throw back the progress of work for half-an-hour; but when the stopping process has to be gone through six, ten, and even fourteen times in a day, it simply destroys all possibility of that quiet and repose which is absolutely necessary for good work. It is hardly humane to send out a maid in the majority of cases, for the organ-fiend is generally exceedingly rude and abusive, and his sympathisers on the pavement not much less so. Besides, he does not often stop at the bidding of a maid. Of course, if a policeman were always at hand, an order to stop playing would be promptly obeyed. But policemen are very seldom at that part of the beat where they are wanted for active service, and the impudent grinder of mechanical noise will continue playing in spite of threats and denunciations till he sees a helmet coming, when he condescends to stop and make off in the opposite direction. If householders would but make common cause against these pests, an embargo could be placed on their playing in certain streets. But alas! all people do not object to them; and those who are unmusical enough, or insensitive enough to disregard irritating sounds, encourage the street organ because it in no way hurts themselves, caring nothing for the misery they mean for people suffering from headaches; pain-stricken ones who have been awake all night, and would fain snatch a little sleep during the day; newly-made mothers whose life depends on a few hours' sleep; infants and little children whose healthy brain-power in the future is often seriously interfered with by the incessant noises of crowded city life; journalists, artists, and teachers. What pitiful tales could be told by nurses and doctors of critical cases sent “to the bad,” by the excitement and anguish caused by a street-organ. It seems hardly credible, that in the nineteenth century, it should be necessary to point out that the unavoidable noises of city and town streets are quite enough to tax the endurance of the citizen, without the super-imposition of wholly unnecessary ones, such as organs, German bands, “specials,” and cab-whistles at night.

It is earnestly to be hoped, that the County Council will see its way to mitigating the street-organ nuisance, and so protecting the in-door life of the sick, the bread-winners, and the thinkers of the day. We need not go to the streets for our music—not the very poorest of us: and one of the absolute necessities of human life alongside of air, food, clothing, and shelter, is quiet. The street-organ murders sleep, and waking peace, and ought to be put down.

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