

it is. In a block so congested the plague spreads swiftly, it is hard to keep the home wholesome and pure when things and people—good and bad—have only partitions between them.

Here is an instance of the way the plague spreads. "Near by, on South Street," writes Mr. Poole, "stands a house of ill-fame, with a tiny attic overhead, reached by a ladder. In this place a consumptive, a woman, lay three months cursing life and waiting for death. Just before the end she was brought down the ladder one night, like a spectre into the brothel, and so out into the ambulance. Thousands, like her, have been sick of this plague in New York. How many have infected their patrons?"

"In one terrible house on the block lived a woman of ill-fame who had the plague and struggled on, as a midwife, for a year."

But not only the dissipated; the hard workers also are gripped by the plague. There was one old couple whose tender devotion to one another was the talk of the block. They drank not a drop, and their rooms were neat as wax—useless cleanliness, when halls and stairways are all foul and infected and black as night.

The old wife took the plague, but kept so cheerful that the husband, who was a night watchman on the dock, began to hope she might get well. "He even thought so one cold night just after Christmas as he ate his supper while she lay in the closet behind. She kissed him good night and was left alone. In the morning at seven he came back. Then the woman next door heard a low, shaking cry. She found the old man sobbing by the bedside. For his wife was dead."

"So the sober and the drunken, the pure and the foul, the well and the sick, are all packed close and mingle. So lungs are made ready for the plague."

And cases which might perhaps be saved if taken in time are lost because the people don't report—won't give up. "Life even in the tenements is bright and full of colour if only you keep up. Lose your grip and things seem to pile up in a day and bury you under. All who watch the tenements will tell you this. 'Don't lose your grip' is the motto.

Charity experts agree that in America the dread of going on charity is generally greater than in any other country of the earth. And so they fight on, because plucky, and because they have seen their plague-stricken friends go to the hospitals only to die. They keep clear and won't believe in time. They fight on blindly."

One case is recorded where the unaided struggle was won in a rotten old tenement. The man was pronounced hopeless, then his wife took charge. They were both Danish, but she had worked as a nurse in the English Army and had fought the cholera in India. For three days, she said, she talked the plague right out of her hus-

band. First—*all doctors were fools!* Second—*he was a coward.* Third—*he must get well.* So she sent to Denmark for a wonderful herb her mother had used, and some Danish sweet oil. She brought out every cent of her savings. Milk, eggs, meat, soup, oil—were given constantly. She moved a lounge right under the open windows. The plague was talked out, oiled out, herbed out. "WICK? a"

The man is now at work again ten hours a day cleaning out manholes.



A "LUNG BLOCK" RESIDENT.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)