

work, and be absent all day. None of the children was old enough to keep the home in order or attend to the mother. A kind neighbour came each morning, prepared food for the day, and made the toilet of the mother and the baby. All day long the children played in and about the room, climbing on the bed, kissing and caressing their mother, devouring eagerly the bits of food or drink left on her plate or in her cup. When weary of play, they would sleep as closely to her pillow as possible. These were the conditions found by the nurse. She explained the danger to the mother, who said, "Ah, yes, when I was first taken we had a doctor, but he said I could never get rid of the cough, but I must do all I could to keep up my strength. Told me what to eat, and said always take as much as I could swallow, that the cough was catching, and that I must not have the children around. But you know, miss, I don't believe I am going to be here long, and my man and I tried to plan the best way about it all. He wants me to pay the lady, our neighbour, something for coming to fix us up and get the meals cooked. So he keeps on at work to get house rent and the things to eat, but it has kept cold so late this spring we had to let the association give us some coal and wood. So he works every day, and the children are pretty good here with me—not much trouble. We cannot send them away because they are so little; they would forget all about me; so we will keep them until I go; then they must live with his people and mine. It can't be much longer, I am sure, miss." Here a little lad of less than four years ran in from the street—just to be loved a little. The nurse tried to make him understand that it was best not to kiss or touch sick people. But the little fellow looked up so earnestly at her, and said, "Wouldn't you want to kiss your mamma every time you could? and if she was sick you ought to want to all the more."

Could this woman have entered a hospital the danger of the family would have been greatly lessened. The expense of the household, perhaps, would have been smaller. Surely, then, the chances for preventing the husband contracting the disease and becoming himself a dependent, leaving the children also without support, should be weighed.

Tuberculosis, like other ills, is a case to be fought in the home. But there are instances where suitable provision cannot readily be had or made in the home.

During the past year our sympathies were greatly aroused in behalf of a young Austro-Hungarian girl of eighteen, who spent a little

more than two years in America, absolutely alone as to family connection in this country. Her case was quite promptly diagnosed, and, with care, seemed in every way curable. She was intelligent, and did all in her power to aid our efforts in her behalf. In a short while her means were exhausted, and she was dependent upon a Hungarian family (whose acquaintance she had made while in America) for food and shelter. It was soon found that she had little food excepting the milk and eggs which the nurse provided. Funds were raised to place her in the little sanatorium in the mountains of Virginia. She improved steadily but slowly. Being very energetic and industrious, the enforced idleness was most trying to her. The physician in charge, also an Austrian, knowing the expense was heavy upon us, and noting her restlessness, which increased with her improvement, advised us to send her back to Austro-Hungary, as her parents were living, and her home in a most healthful section of Austria. Furthermore, as it would be very long before she could retain what progress she had made, except under sanatorium care, it would be cheaper.

This brings out yet another point. Unless light employment can be provided for these improved cases, or their support guaranteed, nothing whatever of material gain is derived from a short stay in a sanatorium. The patient learns to take care of his case and to protect others, but he has not sufficient means to apply the education he has obtained. The situation is quite identical with the Scriptural account of the destitute brother or sister who is told: "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" With sufficient and proper food, favourable environment, and not too arduous work, the consumptives who have had the improvement which comes from a short sojourn in the sanatorium, or even many of the advanced cases, may earn a living, and perhaps aid others.

Yet the percentage of cases able to provide such conditions is extremely small, and the majority must be aided, and usually this assistance can mean only enough for palliative treatment—nothing better.

Self-preservation demands that each and every individual shall exert all the influence possible to procure hospital care for all tubercular patients in such need.

Some years ago, when my professional career began as Superintendent of a hospital in the city of my adoption, with no special ward or provision for tuberculosis, no modern methods.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)