

## Home Occupations in Families of Consumptives and Possible Dangers to the Public.\*

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The keeping of the small restaurant is another form of occupation likely to be found among the consumptives and their families.

All through the poor sections of the cities one sees the sign, "Restaurant, thirty cent dinners," and a list of the enticing eatables that may be obtained there. We see these signs in almost every language, some on fairly nice looking houses, and others on cellar doors. The interiors, if we should happen to enter, are sometimes clean and sometimes filthy, with dirty table-cloths swarming with flies, and, above the smell of cooking, the characteristic odour peculiar to the tubercular.

I visited a house last winter where a case had been reported to me by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The restaurant sign hung before the door, and getting no response to my knocking I entered. I found a large airy room, with rather simple but neat furnishings. A girl of about fifteen, evidently a waitress, met me.

"Does Mrs. B— live here?" I asked. She hesitated, and then led the way to a back room, which proved to be both kitchen and bedroom. Before a table sat an emaciated woman opening oysters. She glanced up at me in a defiant manner, holding her hand over her mouth to stifle the loose, racking cough, and between coughs replied to my questions, denying that she was at all ill, denying even that she had a cough, admitting only that she ran the restaurant and prepared the food.

She really had a good business, the place looked clean, and the food apparently tasted good; those who ate there and knew of her condition were either sorry for her or absolutely indifferent, not understanding the dangers to which they were subjecting themselves.

Most of us are fond of good home-made bread, and often we see a card in the corner of a window, "Home-made bread and rolls." As I entered a house last winter I noticed one of these signs in the window. The front door was open, and as I entered a delicious odour of home-made bread greeted me, and, despite the poor surroundings, I sniffed in the fragrant air. I was looking for the caretaker of the house,

and almost unknowingly I literally followed my nose to the door of the room from which the odour was evidently coming.

In response to my knock the door was opened by a very dirty child, and I found myself in a small room, evidently originally intended for the kitchen of the house, but now being used as the caretaker's room. It contained a huge range, a sink, table, bed, one chair, and a cradle. The husband and wife, five children, a cat, dog, and a rooster lived in this room. The oven door was open and the wife was taking out loaves of beautifully baked bread, while in the cradle was a large dishpan full of dough.

The family were poor, white Southerners, of the most shiftless type. I learned that in return for caring for the house, collecting rents, cleaning hallways, and evicting undesirable tenants, they were given, rent free, the use of this one room, in which the entire family slept, ate, and lived generally, with every door and window closed. They earned a small pittance from the sale of very good bread, made by the wife and delivered by the husband, the latter of whom was beyond the incipient stage of tuberculosis. Every loaf of bread that was sold went through his hands, first in packing it in the basket, and later in handing it to its purchaser. For months this had been going on, the customers unconscious that the bread they were so enjoying was being made under the unsanitary conditions, or, if they knew of it, were unable to appreciate the danger.

These are, of course, only a few of the unsanitary conditions under which work is being done in the homes of the consumptives, and there are many more of equal possible danger to the public, and they should most assuredly be prohibited, either by law or by the education of the public. But remove these various forms of occupation from their reach, or educate them to recognise the danger to the general public, by the continuation of them, and what will you give the poor consumptive and his family who must remain at home to do, that they and their families may be supported?

Various forms of work have been mentioned both by physicians and laymen, understanding the disease and interested in it, but few of them have proved successful.

It really seems that the only efficient means of obtaining employment for these people that is harmless both to themselves and the public, would be in the forming of colonies for them outside of the cities, where, to a certain extent, they could be under supervision. It is when removed from it that they become negligent..

\*Read at the Tuberculosis Congress, Washington.

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