



The Working Poor of Dundee

Transcribed from the Dundee Year Book of 1892 (By a special Lady Correspondent)

1) Causes of Infant Mortality

My Recent inquiries into the conditions of women's work and the prevailing scale of wages paid in the city opened my eyes to several important and astonishing facts and aspects regarding the life of the poorer working classes. For one thing, the deterioration in the physique of the population generally is painfully apparent, but all over the country the same falling off is noticeable to such an extent that the Duke of Devonshire has instigated a State investigation into the matter after a preliminary inquiry of several great physicians. A writer in the "Spectator," commenting on this subject, says:—There is, we believe, some exaggeration in the widespread idea that the physique of our population is declining. All through history every successive generation has indulged in that fancy, and of all generations this is the one that loves most to hunt out and display evils to be remedied. People forget that every population, on earth deposits a sediment, a proportion of weaklings, imbeciles, and undersized folks, which is fixed by some law of which we know nothing, and which increases rather than diminishes as social safety improves, as sanitary science advances, and as pity for the weak becomes a more active virtue. The ricketty, who once died like flies, now tend to remain alive. With the enormous increase of our population the positive number of such persons becomes more and more visible, till observers fancy that some evil change must have passed over the population. They see the hundred loafers in the street, and forget the thousand toilers in the factory.

Leaving Country Homes.

Two immense changes are now passing over our population, adds the writer, and it is necessary to ascertain in a definite, and for the time final, way what the effect of those changes upon the health of the population really is. The people are rapidly quitting the country for the towns. It is not merely that the great cities are growing still—to take only one instance—it is becoming a serious difficulty to supply them with water, but the minor towns are growing till in other countries they would be accounted cities. It is not only that an urban population is more crowded, has less fresh air, and is incomparably taxed as to its brain-power and nerve-power than the rural, but that it has less sleep, fewer intermissions of work caused by climatic conditions, and above all a very different diet, It has less farinaceous food, less milk—a supply of the last importance to the very young—more fish, and a decidedly less supply of well-cooked vegetables. Experts, too, tell us that the cooking of towns, where the country tradition has been lost, so differs from the cooking of the country as seriously to affect the eating of the immigrants who work. The townsman drinks on the whole more spirits and more tea, and the effect of the latter as "made" by the uneducated is by no means beneficial,

Tea, Tea, Tea.

In that concluding sentence the writer hits on one of the greatest causes of the stunted growths, ill-fed bodies, weakly appearances, anaemic faces, "ricketty" limbs of the men, women, and children whom we



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meet in the streets of our city. So far as my observations go, the staple diet of the poor is tea, bread, and margarine.

Where the house-mother works in a mill or factory, and hurries home to prepare a meal for herself and family, she feels she has only time to make a cup of tea, and this she does in a manner peculiar to her class. In many of the poorest Dwellings a shilling gas ring is to be found, and lighting it she fills a teapot with cold water, throws the tea on the top, places it over the fire, and allows it to boil, and this strong, poisonous decoction is hastily drunk to an accompaniment of white bread (brown bread is never used) and margarine or indifferent quality, ranging in price from 4d to 10d per lb,

Dinner consists of exactly the same fare, with the addition, perhaps, if funds admit, of "kitchen" in the form of tinned meat or salmon, cheese, red herring, sausages, a piece of cooked fish, or a bowl of potted meat, bought cheaply at a neighbouring cook-shop. The evening meal is practically the same as the morning, and this from one year's end to another. Occasionally a flagon or jug of soup or broth is carried from an eating-house, But cheap as it seems, it is invariably more expensive than double the quantity would have cost if properly made at home. In many cases where the mother is not employed, the bill of fare is no better, "Trauchled" by & large family of small children, the mother, tired-out and weary it may be, is no early riser, and only leaves her couch at the last minute in order to dress and send the children off to school, and to prepare an apology of a breakfast for her husband.

No Home Comforts.

When he returns to work the muddle in l the house appears so utterly hopeless that she leaves ft to itself, goes out to the door or stair-head with her baby or babies, and spends the fore-noon gossiping with her neighbours. The children arrive for dinner, but a piece with treacle or jam is all that is provided for them, and as the breadwinner's dinner hour approaches, the fire is coaxed into a blaze, or hastily re-lit, the kettle is put on, the well-blackened teapot set nearer the fire, and the same monotonous diet in in dull, dirty surroundings is supplied. Little wonder then that men seek some degree of comfort in the public-house, when every semblance thereof is denied them in their own homes.

Now, the fault to a very large extent lies with the wives many of whom are lamentably ignorant of the first principles of cleanliness and cookery. They are careless and thriftless because they know no better, but "evil is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heat," and the charge of extravagance and improvidence so often brought against the poorest is too well founded. The tea-dinner is more easily prepared than a big pot of broth, but it is vastly dearer, if they would but consider the cost and there is no comparison between the relative nutritive values of the two. Pea or lentil soup made with a bone, a few vegetables. and & plentiful supply of potatoes is a dish not to be despised, and infinitely preferable to tinned meat or the cheapest of mince or sausages even with a liberal addition of savoury onions, the one vegetable in which the thriftless housekeeper deals.



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The claims and health-giving properties of porridge are entirely overlooked. It is too much trouble to cook it properly, and so the one simple, economical food, calculated to supply not only nourishment, but bone and muscle-making properties, is almost utterly neglected by the labouring classes of Scotland, to the detriment of the race, whilst its merits are recognised by the well-to-do classes in England to such an extent that the average public schoolboy at 13 years of age is 2½ inches taller and five and six lbs, heavier than his predecessor of 30 years ago.

A Thrifty House-Wife

In pliant contrast to the lack of culinary skill displayed by the devotees of the teapot is that of mi intelligent wife and mother whose husband has been out of work on account of the slackness of trade in the shipbuilding yards for three months. When asked how she managed she answered cheerily that ii was just wonderful how they had pulled through. "You see," she went on, "I have been at, the St.....'s Mission cooking classes for twa past winters and I can mak' a tasty denner noo oot o' scraps, and have learned to be real economical in ither ways," She is in hopes that next year a laundry-work class may be started in order that she may learn how to do up her husband's and boys' fronts and collars, so that she may send them out decently clad to church on Sundays. A commendable ambition surely, and one that many in Dundee might well emulate!

The Waste that Goes on.

Many a married woman whose husband is earning "a living wage" prefers to work ten hours daily in a mill and allow her family and home to go to ruin simply because " Ws so dull staying at home." Mission and district visitor and nurses hear the same story on every hand. The women have no resources within themselves; no instincts of cleanliness, order, or management; no ambition to keep the home, though humble, neat and tidy, or the fare though frugal, tempting and nourishing, or their children's clothes, though shabby, In foot repair. Some are amenable to reason, but it is vain to point out to others that the 9s or 10s which they earn is of little advantage if they have to pay 5s per week to the day nurseries or some old woman for caring for their children, whilst the balance goes in washing and in waste. There is absolutely no profit to the family purse; the bairns are neglected; the husband and wife have no pleasure in their home; and the latter wears herself out prematurely in a futile attempt to make money. Better far that she should stay at home and try to make ends meet on 18s to 20s a week than that she should sacrifice herself and all she cares for in this uncalled for manner.

Errors in Feeding Children.

If many of the women in our courts and alleys are ignorant of cookery—and many of them do not even know how to make soup or cook rice—their errors in the treatment and feeding of infants are so gross and so fatal as to be scarcely credible by ordinary people.



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One of the lady members at the recent Sanitary Congress in Bradford read a paper, in which she stated that "breast-fed babies who are still breast-fed at two years and over, and hand-fed babies whose diet is either bread or ordinary adult food, are very common sights to people who see much of the poor, and from such a generation we, as a nation, expect to raise an army and a navy second to none in the world." This experience is by no means unique, as the recently appointed Lady Health Visitors in the city can testify. Infants of a few days are fed on bread and milk or cornflour, and some mothers with a hazy idea that oat flour and certain infants' foods are the correct thing for their babies, pour from the tin or packet the preparations into the feeding bottles with a little milk, and without the slightest attempt at cooking, feed their little ones thus. The result is that their tender stomachs and digestive organs are totally unable to assimilate these lumpy masses, and the wonder is not that infantile mortality is so High", but that so many babies survive the treatment they are subjected to from the day they are born.

Help at Hand.

I had a talk with one of the Health Visitors the other day about this and kindred matters, and I was much pleased to learn that even in her short experience of work in Dundee, mothers are realising more the necessity of feeding and caring for their children properly, and that the leaflets prepared by the Health Committee of the Town Council, and gratuitously distributed, are being asked for by young and inexperienced mothers as well as by those who thought they knew all they required to about the upbringing of their families. The practice of giving children of one or two years of age, whatever is going, cannot be too strongly deprecated, although ignorance may resent the teaching like the woman who, on being remonstrated for feeding her infant with ham and egg, retorted—"Shouldn't I know best what is good for her when I have buried eight."

Infantile Mortality.

Dr. Templeman in his report as Medical Officer of Health for 1902, calling attention to the decrease in infant mortality from 53.65 per 1000 births in 1899 to 25.35 last year, writes:—I have repeatedly in my former reports called attention to this mortality, and the influence of weather conditions on its production. It is always at a minimum in cold, wet summers. The past year amply illustrates this, and an examination of the table of infantile deaths proves that the death-rate has always been low when the weather, especially in the late summer and autumn were dull, cold, and wet; while warm and dry summers were characterized by a death-rate above the mean. I have on former occasions referred to Dr Ballard's classical report on the subject, and the fact which he elicited from careful enquiry that the mortality from zymotic diarrhea in infants bore a direct relation to the temperature of the earth, as shown by the four feet thermometer (i.e., the temperature of the soil at this distance below the surface). Milk being the staple food of infants is undoubtedly the medium by which the infection of diarrhea is conveyed, and I think it is highly probable that one of the principal agents concerned in this contamination of milk, if not the chief one, is the apparently innocent house-fly.



The Harmful Fly.

We are now beginning to appreciate the important part played by insects in the carrying of infection to human beings, Dr Templeman proceeds to say, This is well illustrated by the action of certain species of mosquitos in the spread of malarial fever, and it is evident to anyone who has closely studied the subject of zymotic diarrhea that its prevalence is in direct relation to the presence of flies. In dull, cold summers these insects are much less numerous and troublesome than in hot, dry weather, and, moreover, this theory is supported by the fact that this disease is most prevalent in one and two-roomed houses in which the ventilation in and around the house is defective — in many of which domestic filth has to be stored till it can be got rid of — and where no special care is taken to keep milk properly protected. Milk, as is well known, is one of the most receptive substances as regards organic effluvia. Under such domestic conditions the contamination of milk is easily explained, and the house-fly is the most likely medium by which the contamination is produced. Milk, too, is a substance which constitutes an excellent medium for the growth and multiplication of many micro-organisms, so that all the facts regarding the incidence of zymotic diarrhea seem to point to the most important preventive measure, as regards the consumer, being the storage of milk in a proper place, and the adoption of precautions against its being fouled by house flies.

Humanised Milk.

Recognising the difficulty of procuring suitable milk for the feeding of Infants the authorities of the City of Bradford have opened a municipal milk depot and have issued the following among other detailed instructions for the use of the humanised milk. The charge for the full weekly supply of humanised milk for infants under six months is 1s 6d payable in advance. If a day's supply only is taken the charge is 3d. For infants aged from six to eight months who receive 6ozs. per bottle the charge is 1s 9d per week, while for older children receiving 7ozs per bottle the charge is 2s per week or 4d per day, The depot is open from 11 am. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday. Saturday, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Closed all day Sunday. The milk will be supplied in bottles in a basket, each bottle containing sufficient milk for one meal, the amount varying with the age of the child. Infants under two months receive 9 bottles per day; older children receive fewer bottles, as they should be fed less frequently. Every person using the milk will be supplied with a teat, which should be kept scrupulously clean, Extra teats will be charged for at the rate of 3d each. Just before using, each bottle should be placed unopened in a basin, or jug of hot water, and warmed to the proper temperature. The bottle should then be opened and the teat put on. The child should be fed at regular intervals, and fed from these bottles only. On no account should any other feeding-bottle be used. When all the milk in one bottle is not used, the remainder must not be warmed up again, but a fresh bottle opened for the next meal. Where there are other children this milk need not be wasted.



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On no account should bread be given with the milk. The milk will be found quite sufficient if given regularly. The child should be brought once a fortnight to be weighed.

The milk should never be used in preference to mothers' milk, which is the best of all foods for young infants.

Infectious Diseases,

In addition to the leaflet on the management of children. Dr Templeman has issued others, containing hints as to the treatment of children suffering from measles, whooping-cough, &c., in which he seeks to disabuse, the minds of parents of the idea that every child must take on or other, if not all ailments to which juvenile flesh is heir to, and that the sooner they take such and, such a disease the better. In view of the widespread ravages of consumption, and the interest evinced in the fresh air cure, the following facts, as embodied in one of the pamphlets, should be carefully studied : — Consumption is an infectious, and, therefore, to a great extent, a preventable, disease. It is not necessarily transmitted from parent to children, and reasonable precautions may prevent its appearance in persons who are hereditarily inclined to it. The infection is found in abundance in the spit of persons suffering from the disease. If the spit be allowed to dry, it infects the air, and breathing this air may give rise to the disease. It may also be produced by means of tuberculous in meat and milk, but this danger may be averted by thoroughly cooking; the former and by boiling the latter.

All milk, more especially that which is to be given to children, should first of all be boiled,

No consumptive mother should suckle her child.

Cleanliness, fresh air, and sunshine are powerful preventives of this disease, and therefore all dwellings should be constantly kept thoroughly clean, well ventilated, and well flooded with sunlight. The windows of bedrooms should be kept open night and day. Houses which have been occupied by a consumptive patient should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before being occupied by another tenant.

After death, rooms occupied by a consumptive patient should be cleaned and disinfected. By application to the Medical Officer of Health, this will be done by the Official of the Public Health Department, free of charge.

Leaflets, giving simple directions for guidance of persons suffering so that the further infection of themselves and of members of the household may be prevented, can be had on application at the Public Health Office. West Bell Street.



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The crusade against ignorance, dirt, and disease is being waged more rigorously than ever in the city, but much remains to be done in regard to the problem of the housing of the poor, as I hope to show next week in another article.

II. Insanitary Dwellings, Overcrowding, Drink

In a former article I endeavored to account for the poor physique and anemic appearance of hundreds if not thousands, of Dundee's poor by the fact that they were more often improperly fed than underfed, and that an unvarying dietary of tea and bread and margarine could not possibly be expected to build up or support constitutions designed for greater hardships than fall to the lot of the majority of our citizens. Whilst the feeding thereof is greatly responsible for this undesirable state of matters, the insanitary dwellings are scarcely less so. It has been estimated that there are over 9000 one-roomed houses in the city, and in these, many of which are small, badly lit, and ill ventilated apartments, a sad state of overcrowding; exists. True the housing of the poor is one of the burning questions of the hour with philanthropists and legislators, but so vast is its extent and so intricate its mazes, that people who feel that it is beyond solution, may well be excused for their pessimism. Yet the outlook is not entirely dark or discouraging, and the progress towards amelioration though slow is steady.

Model One-Roomed Houses.

It is interesting to learn that a step in the right direction has been taken by Mr Thomas C. Stocks in two tenements which he has erected in North Erskine Street, Dundee. The passages and staircases are wide, airy, and well lighted ; the rooms are large, affording a capacity of 1800 cubic feet of air space; scullery, sink, wardrobe, grate gas-ring, and coal-bunker are all provided, along with washing-house and drying preen, and a closet for every four tenants. The rents, which run from 2s 4d to 2s 6d weekly, are remarkably cheap in view of the miserable garrets for which similar sums are charged. The number of inhabitants is restricted to two adults and a juvenile, and no lodgers are allowed without written permission.

Need for Hygienic Education.

Mr Peter Fyfe, the Chief Sanitary Inspector of Glasgow, says:—"It does not take long for any one moving out and in among the poor to note that gross ignorance on their part plays an all-important part in the causation of disease and death among them. This lies on the very surface, patent to the most inexperienced district visitor. As a rule, the people we are thinking of walk in complete deafness as well as in gross darkness. Even the glowing periods of great statesmen, whose eyes, from their high elevation, are now penetrating the gloom of slumland, do not reach their ears. They are for the most part, all unconscious of the powerful voices resounding throughout the land on the grand necessity for changing the character of their abodes, not only in their own interests, but in the wider interests of the British Empire. The voice of the personal visitor is what they do appreciate. Their knowledge must be got at



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first hand; their thoughts must be instilled by the living contact of flesh and blood. I am deeply convinced, after years of thought and experience, that no power that can be brought to bear on the health of the common people is to be compared with the power of the loving, personal interest of a man or woman who knows their weaknesses and their legitimate wants?," Any one-roomed house with four inmates, say a father and mother and two children, is "passed" by the Sanitary Inspectors as satisfactory, but in numerous instances four is the minimum number. seven, eight, and nine grown-ups and children are to be found huddled together in dark, filthy hovels; and recently I heard of a two-roomed house where no fewer than twenty-five persons were living therein, and another of the same size which afforded accommodation for a family, with its lodgers, removed from a four-roomed dwelling,

Low Standard of Morality.

It is bad enough when one or two rooms must afford accommodation for half a dozen members of the same family, for even then there can be no privacy, and the means for inspiring self-respect are sadly wanting, so that the moral tone is deplorably low. On the recommendation of the Lady Health Visitors, who are doing good work in the slums, several mothers have erected screens around the various beds where their growing lads and girls respectively sleep. The erections are primitive enough, and consist, it may be, of two poles, from which an old bedcover or sheet is suspended, but they are concessions to conventional respectability, and the mothers who err through ignorance and want of thought, appear grateful for these and other suggestions, which ensure a certain amount of that decency of life which does not, unfortunately, accompany our boasted civilisation.

The herding together indiscriminately of the sexes in these small houses is one of the explanations of the lamentable immorality which prevails amongst the lower classes, especially amongst young girls, A year or two ago the proportion of illegitimate children born in the city was roughly speaking 10 per cent., and as these figures do not take account of the fact that the subsequent marriage of the parents rendered their offspring legitimate, a slight reduction may be allowed. Yet the state of affairs is sufficient to make us blush for the reputation of our city, Girls are brought up in such an atmosphere of vice, drink, dirt, and misery that, humanly speaking, it is hopeless to expect that they can escape contamination, or can retain that pearl of womanhood—purity. It is not uncommon occurrence for girls in their early twenties to be the mothers of one, two, or more illegitimate children indeed one woman who had been a wife but a few months owned to being the mother of four sons, one of whom was 17 years of age.

Registration of Lodgings.

If the authorities were to insist on a yearly registration of all houses let to lodgers, and on the strict separation of the sexes in lodgings, much good might in time be effected, and this curse of immorality should be lessened appreciably. At the present time, if a house is once watered, no further report is



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required, although the date of the registration paper may be that of ten years back, and the house then registered may have been long since left. Then, too, I understand that in Glasgow every house in the slums bears the number of cubic feet of space, and as 400 are allowed for each, the sanitary officials strictly deal with those who seek to evade this law.

Want of Ventilation.

The appreciation of fresh air and open windows which prevails amongst intelligent people nowadays, in view of its beneficial effects on general health as well as in the treatment of consumptive patients is gradually spreading in the slums, A Jubilee nurse of much experience told me that those in charge of consumptives very readily carried out instructions as to the keeping open day and night of the windows, and coming out and in and noticing the freshness of the atmosphere as compared with the general stuffiness of their own homes, began to adopt the health-giving plan too. Slum sisters and visitors often find the ventilation of homes a very serious obstacle. The inmates, accustomed to a close, stifling, and poisonous air, complain of the cold and the draught at first, but and by they realise the necessity for such a proceeding, and proudly point in time to their windows lowered by half an inch! It is true although scarcely credible, that in some houses fresh air is positively a luxury, inasmuch as the windows are securely nailed up, and all efforts to move them are futile. Factors, presumably to protect their property and save the wear and tear of pulleys and cord?, adopt this plan, and do not very readily as a rule agree to putting the matter right; but this is a great hardship, and one which the very poorest are beginning to resent.

Dirt and Disease.

When one considers what it must be to live in a small, ill-ventilated, evil-smelling room, with the walls and the ceiling running with moisture or crumbling to decay, one ceases to marvel almost at hopelessness, indifference, and indolence of many a house-mother. What heart has she put to her house to rights when that task would baffle the energy and resourcefulness of the cleverest man or woman? She has neither seen nor known any other or better state of affairs, and she does not possess the knowledge or the instincts of cleanliness,, decency, and hygiene. Teach her these patiently and sympathetically, convince her of her dirt, show her how to mend her ways, and if there is a latent spark of womanliness in her she may respond; if not, her transportation to an up-to-date house would convert it into a slum, which in a comparatively short space of time would rival the old in misery and dirt. How can a woman be clean if, like fresh air, water is also regarded as a luxury rather than a necessity in the slums? How can she subject her house to a thorough cleaning if the water has all to be carried into the house, and one sink has to do duty for four or five tenants, or how can she wash her clothes properly unless she carry them to the Meadows or the Guthrie Street Baths, when washing-houses are unknown? Difficulties like these would handicap the most managing of house-mother, let alone the most incompetent; but, grave as these undoubtedly are, they pale into in-



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significance before that important question of sanitary accommodation, which in most cases is by its absence, to use a hackneyed phrase.

Sanitary Conditions.

In more tenements than one cares to state, there is absolutely no sanitary arrangement, whilst in others one outdoor convenience may have to serve eight or ten families, We boast of our 20th century civilisation but it is difficult to conceive of the people of the dark ages being reduced to using more primitive sanitary contrivances than those still in vogue in this proud Royal Burgh. A stone slab set up on edge is a convenience commonly provided in a shed-like erection, where a number of persons are expected to go at one time, and where there is no provision for privacy. Of course, women cannot go to such places, and this ties them down to the abominable pail system. But bad as these erections are, their unsatisfactory nature is perhaps not so severe a grievance as the fact that they are so sparsely provided that one has often to serve for several blocks of houses all thickly inhabited. It is obvious, too that such contrivances cannot be kept clean and sweet, and the noxious exhalations arising from them constitute a serious danger to the inhabitants in the neighbourhood. Where such conditions prevail it is any wonder that typhus fever (the disease of dirt and squalor), diphtheria, and the deadly typhoid are so seldom absent? Happily within the past two years the authorities have been vigorously engaged in a reformation in the slums. True, Rome was not built in a day, and Dundee cannot be rebuilt in a couple of years, but signs are not wanting that healthier and sweeter conditions of life shall in future fall to the lot of the poorest, and already certain parts of the Scouringburn and Overgate are showing decided signs of improvement. The presence of these abominable pails in the house for 24 hours or longer (they can only be emptied once daily, when the dust-cart goes its rounds, and sometimes days elapse ere the inmates think of doing so), not only poisons the atmosphere, but is bound to taint the food, such as milk, butter, &c., exposed on table or dresser to all the germs or microbes which abound, for rarely is press or cupboard to be noted in the slums.

Early Marriages.

The two extremes of society marry very much earlier in life than middle-class people, and in the case of the very poor it is one of the chief factors in the deterioration of the physique of the men and women of today. Imagine a girl who had not reached her 16th birthday a wife, and the mother of a fine, healthy baby, as it chanced; but such is the exception. If the parents are under-fed, under-sized, and scarcely arrived at maturity, how can their children be aught else but puny weaklings, whose lives are handicapped by hereditary disease from the day of their birth? One evil begets others, and these imprudent early marriages may be traced to the fact that there is no marked dividing line between the wages earned by a man and the wages earned by a woman or a boy and girl. Lads and lasses, in their early teens, may earn as much as their fathers, and so they gain false ideas of their own importance, resent such parental control as may be exercised, leave the home for lodgings, and with that



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precociousness characteristic of the lower grades of life, marry without counting the cost. Lazy young follows marry girls who are likely to be able to work to keep them, and then develop into habitual drunkards or loafers. Both husband and wife may work at first, and their united earnings enable them to live in a better style than that to which they have been accustomed, and for a time all may be well; but with the advent of a family trouble begins, and in the course of a few years the income may have dwindled down from the 25s or 30s of the two to the 13s or 14s of the father, which must support half a dozen. Leaving drink out of the question, the poverty and wretchedness of such a home are assured. No doubt drunkenness itself is a sufficient explanation of many of our greatest evils, but the fact is so patent, the subject so vast, that it is impossible to do more than mention it here.

Evasion of Factory Acts.

It has been said that a coach and four may be driven through any Act of Parliament, and although one would imagine that the Factory Acts might prove the exception, yet there are numerous ways in which even they may be evaded. For instance, one of the rules prohibits the employment of a woman within one month of her having given birth to a child; but there have been eases where a worker has left the mill on a Saturday, a child has been born on the Sunday, and the following Friday has seen her at work somewhere else. It is no uncommon thing for the mother of a two or three days' old infant to be up and about and sewing sacks. In face of facts like these, need we ask why Dundee's poor deteriorate.

Child Nurses.

The children of the slums if they are to live and enjoy a fair amount of health would require exceptional care and nourishment; but instead of that many of them, Topsy like, are allowed to grow up anyhow, on account of the unusual part which mothers take in the industrial concerns of the city. When it is an absolute necessity for a married woman to earn money, or when she elects to do so, she must either place her children in the Day Nurseries, where they are properly cared for for 3d per day each, lock them in the house under the care of the eldest, or entrust them to the care of a neighbour, who of course must be paid for her services and the sum, however small, makes a big hole in the wages paid on Friday or Saturday. Girls and boys of nine and ten, however kind and capable they may be for their age, are quite unfit to nurse babies of a few weeks or months old, and little ones of two and four years left for hours on end by themselves are likely to get into mischief, hence the frequency of those burning accidents which are too terrible almost to read. The wonder is not at the excessive mortality so much as the marvellous vitality of these tiny dwellers of the slums.

Effects of Education.

A recent contributor to a magazine, commenting on the causes of national decay, remarks:— "We have ordered every boy and girl during nine years of the growing time to go to school, that is, to sit quiet for hours, to bend over desks, and to use; their minds instead of their hands and feet. That the effect upon the intelligence of the new generation is, on the whole, most beneficial, we should be the last to deny;



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indeed, we only wish that the period of education could be lengthened by two years; but do we know anything with certainty of its effect upon health. Many observers declare that it is not all good; that even when the schools are perfectly ventilated the confinement is too great, and is in part the cause of the neurotic tendency, the craving for momentary excitement, which they say marks the younger generation of the towns."The effect of sitting for six hours, the effect of years of reading upon a race whose forefathers could not read, and the effect of mental development upon the ill-fed are all effects with a material and direct bearing upon health, and have been far too carelessly studied. We do not feel at all sure that they are wholly beneficial, and trust that they will be most carefully examined, for if the decision is that they are partly injurious the remedy is in our own hands. We cannot, indeed, impair the natural obligations of parents by feeding their children, but we can teach them how children should be fed, and we can make gymnastic training and a quasi-military drill part of the compulsory education in every school."

Any one of these crying evils I have mentioned with which the poor daily contend would affect the health and morality of the healthiest men and women in the world. If Dundee wishes to attain a higher standard of physique and citizenship than she has hitherto achieved, her authorities must wrestle strenuously with the demons of dirt, disease, and drink, must provide decent dwelling for the poor, banish the hovels which disgrace humanity, and seek to awaken in the denizens of the slums, a desire for that knowledge and self-reformation without which all municipal efforts must surely fail.

