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# LIFE IN ONE ROOM:

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SOME SERIOUS CONSIDERATIONS FOR  
THE CITIZENS OF GLASGOW.

*A LECTURE DELIVERED TO THE PARK PARISH LITERARY INSTITUTE,  
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## LIFE IN ONE ROOM.

I shall not readily forget an incident in the delivery of the Right Hon. John Bright's Rectorial Address to the students of Glasgow University in 1884. He had discussed certain questions of the future, arising from the relations of this country to our colonies and dependencies and to foreign nations. Turning to home legislation, he thought to make his remarks more impressive by a reference to the condition of the inhabitants of the city in which his youthful audience was assembled, and in which a considerable proportion had been born. Mr. Bright said: "I was reading the other day a book which many of you have seen, called 'Past and Present.' In it there are some statements made from the Census of the Kingdom of Scotland. The writer states that in the City of Glasgow alone 41 families out of every 100 live in houses having only one room." The right hon. gentleman was immediately interrupted with cries of "oh! oh!" and shouts of incredulous laughter; whereupon he interjected the reminder—"That is the official statement of the Census;" and went on to give further information about the homes of the people of Glasgow, which I shall not quote, as Mr. Bright took his figures from the census of 1871 instead of 1881, to which I shall subsequently refer. I said to myself—was there ever a better illustration of the proverb that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives? Here were facts which had been lying for 13 years in the Census Report, and which were not only unknown to the 2,000 educated youths of the University, but which were so startling in their nature that when made known they were barely believed. Nay more. No passage in that long and eloquent address attracted more attention from the general public. The one and two roomed

houses of Glasgow have almost become a proverb. They immediately furnished the subject of leaders in the newspapers, of speeches from statesmen, and the text of sermons. All thoughtful men were startled with the grave significance of these plain figures as to the physical and moral conditions under which our population lives. In short this passage set alight that flame of interest in the social circumstances of the poor which has spread over the land, and which, if the truth must be told, has been fed by facts which were perfectly well known to all men who in an official capacity or from special philanthropic impulses have been keeping touch with the poorer classes. Now, what does this prove? It proves that if the cup of cold water has not been borne to the parched lips, it is not because of want of sympathy, but because of want of knowledge. It is the old story—the mendicant who holds up his feigned distress to the public eye is sated with undeserved alms, while the poor man who hides his real sufferings at home is unnoticed and unrelieved. Carry him out to the wayside, or better still, go and search for him; and there is that divine impulse in the heart of humanity which will make us rush to his relief; even as, when we see a child stumble, our arms are around it before we are conscious of a throb of sympathy. This being so, I hold that it is our duty as Christian men and women to acquire that knowledge of our fellow-citizens which will give us a reasonable ground for determining the measure of our duty towards them. It is one of the blessed prerogatives of childhood to remain in happy ignorance of the anxieties and cares, the schemes and forethought, which fill the minds of those who maintain about them the comforts of their homes. For all they know to the contrary those comforts come to them with as little effort or design on the part of anybody, and are as far beyond the possibility of miscarriage, as the sun which cheers them at play. They will sleep in full assurance of awaking to their customary bountiful repast, while their parents are sleepless with the anticipation of reverse of fortune. But that which is natural in the child is thoughtless and even sinful in the man and woman. We ought to know something of the social machinery which is kept moving around us. We ought not because *our* bread and water are made sure



lazily to take for granted that the bread and water of others give them as little concern. We ought not to preen and expand *our* virtues to the sun in our self-contained houses, putting them in proud contrast with the vices of those who live in one-roomed houses, without asking ourselves how far both the virtue and the vice are native to the physical circumstances in which we find them.

When my friend, your President, asked me to give you an address, it was by thoughts such as those that I was led to choose to speak to you of the City in which we live. You go about the streets of this great city day by day, and I wish you to have an intelligent sympathy with the life of it. A heathen poet said—"I am a man, and nothing that concerns man is without interest to me;" and surely if this was truly felt by a heathen nearly two hundred years before the birth of Christ, we who live nearly two thousand years after that divine expression of sympathy for man, must adopt the words with a fuller, richer meaning. You have experienced the change which passes over our relations to a man as we come to know something about him. We see him day by day taking his place opposite us at the desk, or his seat beside us in the pew, or we meet him from time to time in the tramcar, or pass him as we walk to business at a certain corner of a street. Bit by bit we come to know where he lives, what he does, what his social circumstances are. The man ceases to be a pale abstraction, and in short becomes to us really a man. I cannot in the same sense make you to know the men and women of Glasgow. I can only build up in your minds by the aid of a few figures and general facts, some notion of the physical circumstances of an impersonal average inhabitant. When we think of a citizen of Rome or of Athens, we have before us the outlines of a being whose home-life and occupation and amusements and general surroundings we could describe. Let us see whether we cannot so distinguish in our thoughts the citizen of Glasgow from the citizens of other cities in this country.

The point of time to which my statements refer is the 4th of April, 1881, when the census was taken, and nothing capable

of expression in figures as to the condition of the population was left to surmise. The inhabitants of Glasgow numbered 511,520 souls. The area of the earth's surface on which they lived extends from E. to W. 5 miles, and from N. to S. fully 3 miles, and contains 6,111 acres or fully  $9\frac{1}{2}$  square miles. These data enable us to work out the most important physical fact in the condition of men in the aggregate, viz., the proportion of their number to the extent of the earth's surface on which they live. A man may learn to exist without air for several minutes if he wishes so to distinguish himself; a man may live for several days without food; and clothing is not at all essential to life, but *space* to live on and in is an absolute necessity. I do not wish to be led into a discussion of "the rights of man" as a citizen, but it is well now-a-days to remember this at anyrate, that if man has any rights at all, one of them certainly is—the right to enough of the area of the earth's surface to afford him standing room, and enough of the cubic space of air thereon at least to crouch in. You may call it a luxury to give him room to lie down in, and space to stretch himself in, but to deny him standing and crouching room is to say in the laeonic language of Aytoun's ballad, "You shall not exist for another day more!" In the phraseology of vital statistics the proportion of population to the earth's surface is called the "density" of that population. In Glasgow the density is 84 persons per acre. The exact meaning of this statement is, that if the whole population were distributed equally over 6,111 acres, there would be on each acre 84 persons; or if each person were assigned his own share of this acre it would of course be the 84th part of an acre or about 58 (57·8) square yards. The significance of this fact can be brought home to your minds only by comparison with other cities. There is only one city in Great Britain which exceeds Glasgow in density and that is Liverpool, where there are 106 persons to the acre. The only city which approaches Glasgow in density is Manchester where there are about 80 persons to the acre (79·5). The density of London is only 51, and of Edinburgh only 55. Excepting Greenock and Edinburgh no other town in Scotland exceeds half the density of Glasgow; most are far below that figure.

Let us endeavour to unfold to you somewhat the meaning of this first fact concerning the average citizen of Glasgow—that he has less of the earth's surface on which to live than the citizen of any city save one in the kingdom. This area gives us the proportion of the universal bounties of nature which he enjoys. The vertical space of the general atmosphere rests upon the 84th part of an acre on which he stands. We measure the sunshine and the rainfall by this area. Nor do we fully represent the state of the case if we infer that the inhabitant of the city gets a smaller share of the full quantity of these bounties of nature. The denser the city is, the more befouled is the earth with organic impurities; the thicker becomes the canopy of smoke which cuts off the sunshine; the fouler are the rain and the streams and springs which traverse the earth. The self-purifying properties of soil and air and water are overpowered by the amount of the work thrown upon them. From all these disadvantages of density therefore Glasgow suffers beyond all other cities, and as I have elsewhere said: "Altogether we are as far shut out from the ministry of nature as the necessities of the case, combined with the aggravations of human ignorance, perversity and wilful self-aggrandisement, can place us."

I have said that this element of density is calculated upon the assumption that every person is equally distributed over the area of the city, each standing in the centre of his or her own plot. On this supposition another fact may be worked out, which is—the average "proximity" of each person to his neighbour. This is simply the length of a straight line drawn from the centre of one plot to the next. In Glasgow, this is slightly over 8 yards (8.12). You will understand at once that the proximity must vary exactly as the density, and therefore in Glasgow we are on the average nearer to each other than in any city save Liverpool. This means that in the various relations of our lives we are more apt to jostle against and interfere with one another, either for good or for evil. As I confine myself at present to physical relations, it is obvious that we are more apt to interfere with one another to our mutual disadvantage. This is absolutely and universally true as regards physical evil. Take infectious disease as



a typical illustration. Throughout the community as a whole, infection, which means the passage of a material something from person to person, must take place in proportion to their average proximity. If that is in Glasgow 8 yards and in Edinburgh 10, then the chances favourable to infection in Glasgow must be in that proportion greater than in Edinburgh, unless indeed by greater care in the treatment of cases of infectious disease we diminish those chances.

Now let us turn to the class of facts upon which Mr. Bright touched. As a matter of fact, the population is not equally distributed over the area of any city. The space in which people really live—that space the extent of which most influences their health and comfort, and even conditions the moral relations of their lives—is the space which is their own, viz., their house-room. The extent of this space or the size of the house determines the local density. While the average density of all Glasgow is 84 persons per acre, the local density varies from 25 to 348, in the 24 sanitary districts into which the city is divided. You can apply for yourselves to these facts all that I have said as to the evils of density. If we classify all the houses in Glasgow, we find that in every 100 there are 30 of only one apartment, 44 of only two apartments, 15 of three, and only 5 of five apartments, and upwards. This enormous proportion of small houses will sufficiently explain the low average rental of a Glasgow house. The hovels of the East completely swamp the palaces of the West, and produce an average of only £11 6s. 9d. The size of this average house is only 2·3 rooms, each occupied by 2 persons fully (2·042). The highest average of rooms per house in any district is a little over 4 (4·046); the lowest considerably under 2 (1·679). The highest average of inmates per room is about 3 (2·94); the lowest  $1\frac{1}{4}$  (1·25). I am unable to give you parallel statements regarding any other city, because the data have not been worked out. Indeed, the materials do not exist excepting for Glasgow, so that I may ask you to note this fact, that the authorities of Glasgow have a minute knowledge of the physical condition of their people which no other authorities possess, and therefore ignorance cannot be pled in extenuation of any backwardness in improving this condition. I can



however, give you the exact comparative position of your city among the eight chief towns of Scotland as regards the proportion of their populations living in the various sizes of house. Mr. Bright gave the proportion of families, but it is of more importance in estimating the extent to which the advantages and disadvantages of house-room are imposed upon the population to ascertain the proportion of individuals. Of the inhabitants of Glasgow, 25 (24·7) per cent. live in houses of one apartment; 45 (44·7) per cent. in houses of two apartments; 16 per cent. in houses of three apartments; 6 per cent. (6·1) in houses of four apartments; and only 8 per cent. in houses of five apartments and upwards. There is no town in Scotland which has so large a proportion of its population living in one-room houses. There is no town in Scotland which has so small a proportion of its population living in houses of five rooms and upwards. In Edinburgh, above 27 (27·3) per cent. of the people live in houses of five apartments and upwards, and only 17 per cent. (16·8) in houses of one apartment. The dreadful struggle for life in Glasgow as compared with Edinburgh is shown by the fact that in Glasgow one-room houses contain more inmates on the average than in Edinburgh, and the large houses fewer. But even in Glasgow there are only 7·8 persons in the large houses as compared with fully 3 in the one-room houses—a difference in the physical circumstances of these two classes of citizens which alone places them far as the poles asunder in respect of the preservation of health and the opportunity for purity of life. I am anxious to emphasize this difference by the accumulation of facts which can be expressed in cold figures. Figures are beyond the reach of sentiment, and, if they are sensational, it is only because of their terrible, undisguised truthfulness. You must not think of the inmates of those small houses as families in the ordinary sense of the term. No less than 14 per cent. of the one-roomed houses and 27 per cent. of the two-roomed contain lodgers—strange men and women mixed up with husbands and wives and children, within the four walls of small rooms. Nor must I permit you in noting down the tame average of fully 3 inmates in each of these one-apartment houses to remain ignorant of the fact that there are thousands of these

houses which contain 5, 6, and 7 inmates, and hundreds which are inhabited by from 8 up even to 13!

Percentages, though an accurate, are but a feeble mode of expression for such facts regarding men and women like ourselves. I have told you that in 1881 the population of Glasgow was 511,520 persons, and that of those 25 per cent. lived in one-room, and 45 per cent. in two-roomed houses; but what does that mean? It means that 126,000 persons *live* in those one-roomed, and 228,000 in those two-roomed houses. But is that all I can say? I might throw down that statement before you, and ask you to imagine yourselves, with all your appetites and passions, your bodily necessities and functions, your feelings of modesty, your sense of propriety, your births, your sicknesses, your deaths, your children,—in short, your *lives* in the whole round of their relationships with the seen and the unseen, suddenly shrivelled and shrunk into such conditions of space. I *might* ask you, I *do* ask you, to consider and honestly confess what would be the result to you. But I would fain do more. Generalities are so feeble. Yet how can I speak to you decently of details? Where can I find language in which to clothe the facts of these poor people's lives, and yet be tolerable? The words of Herr Teufelsdröckh, when at midnight, from his attic lodging, he looked down upon the town of Weissnichtwo, will help me a little. He said to his friend—"Oh, under that hideous coverlet of vapours, and putrefactions, and unimaginable gases, what a Fermenting-vat lies simmering and hid! The joyful and the sorrowful are there; men are dying there, men are being born; men are praying,—on the other side of a brick partition men are cursing; and around them all is the vast, void Night. . . . Wretchedness cowers into truckle beds, or shivers hunger-stricken into its lair of straw; in obscure cellars *Rouge-et-Noir* languidly emits its voice-of-destiny to haggard, hungry villains. . . . Riot eries aloud, and staggers and swaggers in his rank dens of shame; and the mother, with streaming hair, kneels over her pallid, dying infant, whose cracked lips only her tears now moisten.—All these heaped and huddled together, with nothing but a little carpentry and masonry between them; crammed in like salted

fish in their barrel ; or weltering, shall I say, like an Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers, each struggling to get its *head above* the others : *such* work goes on under that smoke-counterpane ! ”

It is those small houses which produce the high death-rate of Glasgow. It is those small houses which give to that death-rate the striking characteristics of an enormous proportion of deaths in childhood, and of deaths from diseases of the lungs at all ages. Their exhausted air and poor and perverse feeding fill our streets with bandy-legged children. There you will find year after year a death-rate of 38 per 1000, while in the districts with larger houses it is only 16 or 17. Of all the children who die in Glasgow before they complete their fifth year, 32 per cent. die in houses of one apartment ; and not 2 per cent. in houses of five apartments and upwards. There they die, and their little bodies are laid on a table or on the dresser, so as to be somewhat out of the way of their brothers and sisters, who play and sleep and eat in their ghastly company. From beginning to rapid-ending the lives of these children are short parts in a continuous tragedy. A large proportion enter life by the side-door of illegitimacy. One in every five of all who are born there never see the end of their first year. Of those who so prematurely die, a third have never been seen in their sickness by any doctor. “ The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst ; the young children ask bread and no man breaketh it unto them.” Every year in Glasgow the deaths of from 60 to 70 children under five years of age are classified by the Registrar-General as due to accident or negligence ; and it is wholly in these small houses that such deaths occur. Half of that number are overlain by drunken mothers, others fall over windows and down stairs, are drowned in tubs and pails of water, scalded, or burned, or poisoned with whisky. I can only venture to lift a corner of the curtain which veils the life which is lived in these houses. It is impossible to show you more.

These are some of the worst fruits of life in the one and two roomed house, the ultimate products of that degeneration, moral and physical, which proves that the whole bias and



tendency of life there is downwards. But let us ask ourselves what life in one room can be, taken at its best. Return to those 126,000 men, women, and children, whose house is one apartment, and consider whether, since the world began, man or angel ever had such a task set before them as this—the creation of the elements of a home, or the conduct of family life within four bare walls. You mistresses of houses, with bed-rooms and parlours, dining-rooms and drawing-rooms, kitchens and washing-houses, pantries and sculleries, how could you put one room to the uses of all? You mothers, with your cooks and housemaids, your nurses and general servants, how would you in your own persons act all those parts in one room, where, too, you must eat and sleep and find your lying-in-room and make your sick-bed? You fathers, with your billiard-rooms, your libraries and parlours, your dinner parties, your evening hours undisturbed by washing-days, your children brought to you when they can amuse you, and far removed when they become troublesome, how long would you continue to be that pattern husband which you are—in one room? You children, with your nurseries and nurses, your toys and your picture books, your space to play in without being trodden upon, your children's parties and your daily airings, your prattle which does not disturb your sick mamma, your special table spread with a special meal, your seclusion from contact with the dead, and the still worse familiarity with the living, where would you find your innocence, and how would you preserve the dew and freshness of your infancy—in one room? You grown-up sons, with all the resources of your fathers for indoor amusement, with your cricket fields and football club and skating pond, with your own bed-room, with space which makes self-restraint easy and decency natural, how could you wash and dress, and sleep and eat and spend your leisure hours in a house of—one room? You grown-up daughters, with your bed-rooms and your bath-rooms, your piano and your drawing room, your little brothers and sisters to toy with when you have a mind to, and send out of the way when you cannot be troubled, your every want supplied, without sharing in menial household work, your society regulated, and no rude rabble of lodgers to sully the purity of your surroundings, how could you



live and preserve "the white flower of a blameless life"—in one room? You seek ones, in your hushed seclusion, listen to Charles Lamb's description of you:—"Household rumours touch him not. Some faint murmur, indicative of life going on within the house, soothes him, while he knows not distinctly what it is. He is not to know anything, not to think of anything. Servants gliding up or down the distant staircase, treading as upon velvet, gently keep his ear awake, so long as he troubles not himself further than with some feeble guess at their errands. . . . He opens his eye faintly at the dull stroke of the muffled knocker, and eloses it again without asking—'Who was it?' He is flattered by a general notion that inquiries are making after him, but he cares not to know the name of the inquirer. In the general stillness and awful hush of the house, he lies in state and feels his sovereignty?" How would *you* deport yourself in the racket and thoughtless noise of your nursery, in the heat and smells of your kitchen, in the steam and disturbance of your washing-house, for you would find all these combined in a house of—one room? Last of all when *you* die, *you* still have one room to yourself, where in decency you may be washed and dressed and laid out for burial. If that one room were your house, what a ghastly intrusion you would be! The bed on which you lie is wanted for the accommodation of the living. The table at which your children ought to sit must bear your coffin, and they must keep your unwelcome company. Day and night you lie there until with difficulty those who carry you out thread their tortuous way along the dark lobby and down the narrow stair through a crowd of women and children. You are driven along the busy and unsympathetic streets, lumbering beneath the vehicle which conveys your scanty company to the distant and cheerless cemetery, where the aerid and deadly air of the city in which you lived will still blow over you and prevent even a blade of grass from growing upon your grave.

I think you will agree with me in this inference, that in the city in which we live there is great room for the development of practical Christianity. There is probably no better field in the three kingdoms for those who would imitate Christ in ministering to the bodies as well as to the souls of

men: and there is no hope for the people who live in one and two roomed houses unless the Church, which is the healing hand of Christ still present in our midst, becomes the motive power in society, directing our rulers to wise public measures, and stirring the hearts of individuals to private beneficence. The question for us is, what can we do? The solution of the social problems of the age is for us the doing of something here and now. Our lives are fleeting: the lives of those who furnish the problem are fleeting, and if we act not now, we shall be "unprofitable servants," and those we might have profited will rise up in the judgment against us.

It is obvious that no manner of occupancy will make a one-room house a home in the proper sense of the word. Therefore there is among us a large population who are, from whatever ultimate cause, absolutely debarred from the requisite physical conditions even of the lowest standard of home comfort, and who are always on the inclined plane of moral deterioration. We may discuss, if we please, the question whether there ought to be such houses, whether it is necessary that there should be such houses, whether their existence depends upon inadequate wages, or the mis-spending of adequate wages. Indeed these questions ought to be discussed; but let us not meanwhile forget that there they *are*, and that human beings are living in them under the physical and moral disadvantages described, and we are bound to endeavour to make their lives happier and better. I venture to believe this very endeavour is the most natural and most likely way bit by bit to do away with one-room houses, by elevating the aspirations of their inmates, and restoring them to self-respect by recognizing that they are our brothers and our sisters. If we deny them this recognition I see no prospect for them but degeneracy into "Dead Sea apes," or something worse! It is encouraging to know that Glasgow is improving. In 1861 there were in a much smaller population 145,000 persons living in one apartment. There are now as I have said 126,000; and there is a corresponding increase in the inhabitants of houses of two and three apartments. We are therefore moving in the right direction and that not by any revolutionary force from without, but by a higher standard of

life growing in the minds of the people. Still the inhabitants of those small houses require our active Christian sympathy and assistance, and in a city which is the greatest aggregation of working people with the smallest admixture of the wealthy class to be found in this country there will always be this necessity.

This suggests a remark in passing on the anomalous position of the city in which we live, as regards local administration. This was the subject of the recent inquiry of the Boundaries Commission which sat in Glasgow; and it is one which has a vital relation to the interests of the dwellers in small houses. Whatever may come of the labours of this Royal Commission, I trust the working classes have been able to penetrate all the ignoble and irrelevant suggestions of municipal and official aggrandizement, and the equally ignoble concealment of selfish interest in the maintenance of the present sub-divisions under the specious guise of local advantages—"Govan opinion," as distinct from Glasgow opinion, independent and self-originated centres of industry, colonies of annuitants and widowers, resident patriarchal representatives, and all that sort of thing—I say I hope the working classes have been able to sweep away all such misleading suggestions, and to get at the real issue. It is this, that we are one community, and have one interest, which should be under one Local Government. No section of this community should be allowed to stand aloof from its common burdens. I can conceive of nothing more dangerous in the face of such social problems as those which are inherent in the necessities of the dwellers in small houses than the continuance of the division, which distracts this large community, and makes social reform either impossible to effect, or unrighteous if effected; impossible in so far as social improvements presuppose unity in the society requiring the improvements; unrighteous inasmuch as a section of a society or community cannot effect sectional improvement at sectional cost, without benefiting the whole, and therefore there should be a common purse to pay for what of necessity is a common benefit. Within the family, which is the unit of society, there is mutual helpfulness and interdependence. Between one family and another in a community there is mutual helpfulness



and interdependence. If it were not so communities never would have existed. Where, in the aggregation of families and householders on one soil, under the expanse of one sky, in the soft embrace of one atmosphere, shadowed by the same passing cloud, or made bright by one sun, smitten by the same disease or adversity, rejoiced by the same health or prosperity, where can we safely permit the erection of an administrative barrier, and say, here the necessity for this practical sympathy and co-operation ceases? "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Philosophy and morality alike demand unity in the civic life. The East-end must not be allowed to groan under the burdens of its physical necessities, while Hillhead and Crosshill and Pollokshields live in luxury, congratulating themselves on their low taxation, and the mean enjoyment of parks and museums and picture-galleries, paid for by the pence of the Glasgow poor. Could anything be more immoral and unchristian than the argument that the City Improvement tax was expended for the benefit of the central parts of the city, and, therefore, it would be unjust to levy it upon the people who are wealthy enough to live in the suburbs? Just as if in one body, traversed by the same system of arteries and veins and nerves, there could be such a thing as a local benefit or a local injury. Yet how often have I heard learned counsel pressing this argument in the interests of gentlemen whose fathers, if not themselves, have been born in those streets which are now the slums of Glasgow, and who are helped every day to amass their fortunes by their poor brethren and sisters who now inhabit those slums. Can we wonder if from the wynds and closes of Glasgow there should come the bitter answer, "Woe unto you, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers?"

In spite of this injustice inherent in the circumstances of Glasgow, much has been done to supply by taxation those physical accessories of small houses which dwellers in large houses provide for themselves, which from mere want of space the poor cannot have, but which, if they are indeed brothers and sisters, they require as much as the rich. Taxation for such purposes is eminently Christian in motive and effect. It



may be called Christian Socialism. All contribute, but the well-to-do are not taxed directly for their own benefit, although it is to be hoped we recognize the truth of one of those sayings of the late Prince Leopold which make us regret his untimely death—"Along the ways of wisdom and virtue we shall all advance further, if we all advance together."

Our public baths and wash-houses are the best and most ample in the country. Every inmate of a small house may find there those conveniences for private ablutions which cannot be got at home, and the women may, at a trifling cost, avoid turning their homes into washing-houses. Our model lodging houses help to lessen the horrid evil of lodgers in small houses. The sick, in so far as their sickness arises from infectious disease, have access without special charge to what is the finest Fever Hospital in the country. We still require public mortuaries to lessen the necessity for the ghastly presence of the dead in the one-room house. Our parks, galleries, and museums furnish means of recreation, culture and instruction, but we have no system of Free Libraries bringing the means and quiet room for study to every district of the city. There is also a sad want of play spaces for the little children in Glasgow. I regret the attitude of our School Board to this necessity. It is neither logical nor just. I shall have something more to say on behalf of the children when I come to speak of various forms of private beneficence, but I wish our authorities would think a little more of the toddling "things" who cannot walk to our parks, and whose mothers have not time to carry them thither. One often stumbles over them creeping about dark lobbies, and many a time one has to pick his steps carefully, so as not to interfere with their attempts to play at houses on the stairs. If they venture further they will find only the dead air and nauseous environments of the back courts, or the dangerous street. Probably the Glasgow boy is the wildest, most destructive specimen of a boy in existence, and why? It is a law of child-nature to be constantly moving, constantly doing something, and what can a poor boy do in Glasgow but pull the bricks out of the walls of the ashpits, or climb on to the roof and tear off the slates. The landlords complain that

the police do not protect their property, but if they would not be so greedy of the soil, and provide more space for innocent games, the evil would be cured. I need scarcely say that I sympathize with the poor boys more than with the landlords. I also think that a few open spaces here and there, made clean and smooth with asphalt or granolithic, where boys could spin tops and little children could sprawl about in safety, would serve the necessities of the rising generation better than the parks. There also, some area, clear of shrubs and flower-beds ought to be preserved for young men. Where can working lads go to get a game at football or play at cricket? The young men of the West-end expend large sums of money to obtain space for these recreations; and even they are every year driven further away and put to greater expense. It is sad to see the poorer lads lounging at the close-mouths, when they ought to be developing their muscles, and acquiring that love of outdoor sport which is the best antidote to the temptations of the music hall, the dancing saloon, and the dram shop. Yet, what can they do? Their poor pence will not suffice for the rent of a field, and they ought to be supplied out of the public funds. Let us have public gymnasia; and, if we are to be breeders of men and not of vicious loafers, do not let us confine our efforts to the growing of grass in our parks and the luxury of looking at it over an iron railing.

Now, let us turn to the development of practical Christianity by private effort. Hospitals for the sick are the special product of Christianity. Uhlhorn\* tells us that in Pagan Rome and Greece—"There were no poorhouses and no hospitals. Lazarettos in the Roman Empire were curiously enough known as places for soldiers and slaves only. Antoninus Pius indeed tells us that he had built beside the temple of the Epidaurian Æsculapins, a building for the reception of the sick. But this was not a hospital. It was rather a kind of hostelry for those who had come to pray to the god on account of their sickness." (p. 14.) He adds—"They had not charity." Glasgow is well supplied with general hospitals; but not too well. Their resources are drawn upon to meet the wants, not of Glasgow merely, but of the enormous working population of Lanarkshire.

\* Christian Charity in the Ancient Church. Edinburgh, 1883.

Another is about to be built on the south-side. I do not think these hospitals are supported as they ought to be by the public of Glasgow. If the miseries of sickness in the small houses were more vividly before the public mind, I am sure the benevolent gentlemen who give so much of their time to the management of those institutions would not be worried as they constantly are about their finances. They require more of the shillings and half-crowns of the middle classes. There is no way in which money can be charitably bestowed with less risk of being misapplied.

But when thinking of the physical disadvantages of small houses as a subject of benevolent help and alleviation, what comes to my thoughts with ever recurring persistence is the dull, dead, unrelieved monotony of the conditions of life within them and around them. Mr. Buckle wrote a history of civilization, the philosophy of which was that in form and character civilization was determined by the influence of the physical agents—climate, soil, food, and the general aspects of nature—on the races of mankind. Under general aspects of nature he contended for “the influence exercised by the external world in pre-disposing men to certain habits of thought, and thus giving a particular tone to religion, arts, literature, and, in a word, to all the principal manifestations of the human mind.” Buckle went too far in his desire to make the moral and spiritual nature of man entirely the product of external and material agencies; so that, soul and body, he must change with the flora and fauna of his district. But it is certainly true that the physical surroundings even of the individual man will leave their mark on his soul as well as on his body; and the one result may be as regards his individual responsibility, as inevitable as the other. Place 126,000 human beings in one-room houses, and 43,000 in houses of five rooms and upwards, and, no matter who or what they are, you have at once determined for them much both of their moral and physical future. If their course is downwards, the one class has further to fall than the other before both reach the same depth. If their course is to be upwards, the one class has not so far to rise as the other before both reach the same height. All through life man divides his time between work and sleep and play,—play including all ways of



spending those hours which are not absorbed in work and sleep. The education of the child and the toil of the adult are *regulated for him*, and imposed upon him. The *play* of both is in its character *a matter of choice*, and nothing shows more clearly the inner nature than the nature of the play. But the nature of the play is very much a matter of education and of opportunity; and the opportunity of the child is the education of the adult. If the child has only the dark lobby and the stair to play in, then the man and woman will find amusement only in the dram shop, the music hall, and the dancing saloon. The gutter child grows up into the loafer. The hard-working man when he gets a holiday does not know how to spend it. Even when he finds himself in the country, he has frequently no eye for the scenery, or for the beauties of the grass and the flowers. He carries too often a bottle of whisky in his pocket, and he makes himself an object of alarm and disgust. The hard-working woman either joins in the debauch, or thinks no shame to be seen in the company of intoxicated men. There is no way of forming a just opinion as to these habits of the inhabitants of our small houses, but by calmly and conscientiously analyzing what I might call the physics of our own morality. If Buckle has successfully proved regarding mankind in the mass, inhabiting different regions of the earth, that there is an "influence exercised by the external world in pre-disposing men to certain habits of thought, and thus giving a particular tone to religion, arts, literature, and, in a word, to all the principal manifestations of the human mind," and I believe he has, then is it possible that the one and two roomed house piled up in tenements, and these tenements again ranked in streets and packed into back courts, can produce the same manner of men as the large houses with all the luxurious space and opportunity of the softening ministration of nature *without*, and the tender wooing of light and warmth and comfortable domesticity *within*? I confess for myself that the physical circumstances of the poor in Glasgow are so contrary in their nature to those which have surrounded me throughout my life and I recognize such a close relationship between my physical circumstances and the general character of my life, that I can come only to one or other of two conclusions: Either the poor belong to a different species of the genus man, or the same



relationship must exist between *their* different physical circumstances and the different general character of *their* lives.

I feel that I am occupying your time too much with general philosophizing. I have striven to lead you into an intelligent view of your relations as Christians to the city in which we live. I plead for general helpfulness to enable the inhabitants of the one-roomed houses to bear the burdens of their lives. I must leave you to find out for yourselves the various methods, which may lie to your hands and be adapted to your individual circumstances and capacities, of working in the general direction which I have indicated. I commend to your kindly interest and Christian liberality the Association for Nursing the Sick Poor at Home, the Kyrle Society, the Day Nurseries, the Day Feeding Schools, Poor Children's Dinner Tables, Flower Missions, Fresh-air Funds, Foundry Boys' Association, and the like. I put in a special word for the children because of their essential helplessness, and because they are the men and women of the future. It is so easy to make a child happy. If you only take a few poor children to the country for a day, or admit them to a garden or a plot of grass for an hour or two; or gather a few together on a winter's night and show them a magic lantern, or play to them and teach them a lively game, or sing a nursery rhyme, or tell them a nursery story, their happiness is secured. I read lately the life of Paul Merritt, a man who was born in the most miserable circumstances, but who grew up to be a well-known art critic; and the first awakening of his faculty was a peep through a keyhole into a garden. He writes—"I was in my eleventh year, meanly clothed, poorly fed, and penniless—an errand-boy in receipt of 1s. 6d. a week." He discovered a garden, peeping with a boy's curiosity through the keyhole in the tall wooden gate. "I looked through the keyhole every time I passed and that was four times daily, and always with increased interest, for my flowering aconite. But oh! trouble upon trouble, one day I found the keyhole stopped, and there was an end of my daily joy and of the interest which had awakened in me a new craving for the wonders of nature." A few days after, grubbing among the rubbish thrown out from this garden he found a budding something which seemed to him to

have "the promise and potency of life," though of what sort he knew not. He nurtured it in an old teapot, and it shortly burst out—the first crocus he had ever seen. Years after, when surrounded with beauty in his studio in London, he described how—"one sunny, silent, Sunday morning, this crocus opened its golden glowing sacramental cup, gleaming like light from heaven, dropped in a dark place, living light and fire." Let this experience teach you by what simple means—a flower, a song, one bright day in the country—child-nature may in its growth be turned upwards towards the light.

I have now in a way very fragmentary and not at all satisfactory to myself, but the only way possible to a busy man, brought before you the physical circumstances of the inhabitants of the city in which you live as a field for practical Christianity. I have said the only hope for Glasgow lies in the Church, which alone has the hand endowed with virtue to convey healing to those social sores. The same may be said of all our towns according to their special necessities. The constantly increasing proportion of the population of this country which is concentrating round our towns constitutes one of the most anxious features of the times. Be assured if the Church neglects this field, the devil and his ministers will not. Those one and two roomed houses are filled with restless, uncomfortable souls, wakening up to the contrast between their misery and the luxury of their neighbours, and ready to grasp at any theory or project however wild, which promises material relief. Nihilism, Communism, Socialism, Mr. George, Bradlaugh, even Cunningham Graham—any sort "of Morrison's Pill" will be eagerly swallowed. That is the future before us if the Church does not carry soothing and sanity to the physical discomforts of the people. I cannot find words in which to take leave of you and of my subject, better than those of Carlyle:—

"It is to you, ye Workers, who do already work, and are as grown men, noble and honourable in a sort, that the whole world calls for new work and nobleness. Subdue mutiny, discord, wide-spread despair, by manfulness, justice, mercy, and wisdom. Chaos is dark, deep as Hell; let light be, and there is instead a green flowery World. Oh, it is great, and there is no

other greatness. To make some nook of God's creation a little fruitfuller, better, more worthy of God ; to make some human hearts a little wiser, manfuler, happier—more blessed, less accursed ! It is work for a God. Sooty Hell of mutiny and savagery and despair can, by man's energy, be made a kind of Heaven ; cleared of its soot, of its mutiny, of its *need* to mutiny ; the everlasting arch of heaven's azure overspanning *it* too, and its cunning mechanisms and tall chimney-steeples ; God and all men looking on it well pleased."

END.

