

has shown that every sudden noise causes an increase of blood in the brain without awakening the sleeper. In other words every sudden noise presses action upon the brain; and we know from experience that it is not only the suddenness of noise but also its continuance that wearies us. Everybody knows the feeling of relief that comes over us when ventilating machinery stops, though we did not before notice its action or the strain it imposed on us. The peace of a snowy day in the city—when all sounds are muffled, and even the roaring of the trolley cars is subdued—is also a thing that haunts the memory. The enjoyment of these moments of peace is a measure of the strain that is upon us when, however uncsciously, we are bucking against the noise. It is this strain that is wearing us out; sending some to travel and others to be shut up in asylums; but for most of us, who are not liable to break down—or are not liable to break down yet—just keeping our brains uselessly active all the time; adding to the effort of life and subtracting from the strength available to meet it.

The question of course is how much of this we must bear and how much we need not. Mitigation of the main trouble means large dealings with the street traffic which is the main source of noise. What has been done already in this way is an indication of what can be done. A generation is growing up, in this country, which has never known what the noise of a cart on cobblestones is like. The change that has resulted in London, by the general adoption of rubber tires, is to be measured by the astonishment with which, when watching the smooth going of the carriages along the drive in Hyde Park, one hears approaching from the distance the rumbling of a steel-tired carriage that some old fashioned person has brought up to London from the country. The London of Pennennis must have had a very noisy splendour. They have a new noise problem now in London in the shape of the motor busses. If one may judge from the outcry about them, there will be some effort to get rid of their noise, made in time to be of service to us when this form of transport reaches us. In the meantime our large problem is the trolley car, before which motor omnibusses are silent and ashamed. If it survives as a means of transport, it will probably go underground to leave more room on the streets, and so we shall get rid of its noise when we are not using it. But this is merely speculation about the future; what can be done now is of more importance, if in a smaller way.

If we reflect upon the numerous noises that combine to heap annoyance on us, it is surprising how many of them are of a private character, which no man can have a right to inflict upon his fellow citizens and which therefore may be restrained. They are part of our general carelessness about living, and it is to be feared, if examined into closely, would be found to be the indirect result of a lax or undeveloped public morality. We let others do to us what in the same case we would be likely to do to them.

A manufacturer who wants to intimate to half a hundred employees—all waiting within sound of a hand bell—that it is time to go to work, blows a whistle that makes a noise a mile away. Piano organs, with the terrible mandolin touch, can bray the most painful music over and over for half an hour in one

small area. The seductions of cheap amusement are now-a-days indicated by a phonograph, turned out of doors and delivering raucous noises into the street. Negro minstrels—foreign negro minstrels—are free to march down our streets and bang rag-time into the ears of horses that are accustomed to classical music. In building operations the signals intended for the ear of the hoisting engineer are delivered to a whole neighborhood. Anybody who wants to advertise anything can ring a bell, blow a horn, or shout. Anybody can shout, so long as he does it every day.

How differently they manage these things in Germany. Only the other day we had in the telegraphic news from Berlin an account of two men who were arrested for loud sneezing. Sneezing! There is a fortune awaiting the man who can sneeze loud enough to be heard across one of our streets. He need do nothing henceforth but take snuff and charge admission. It was doubtless to amuse us that this piece of news was given to us by cable; and it did amuse us. But, when one comes to think about it, should we not be the better for a little paternal legislation in the matter of noise.

The representative in New York of an eminent firm of German booksellers used to visit the offices of architects in this country. On one occasion he came after having visited Germany for the first time in twenty years. He had found himself an American in habits of mind, and Germany was strange to him. In particular these paternal restrictions to free action gave him annoyance. He threw a piece of paper in the street; a policeman made him pick it up again and pocket it. He tried to smoke on the tail end of a street car; the conductor tapped him on the shoulder and told him he must not. He had to behave himself in ways that were strange to him, and disagreeable. He wanted to go back to New York and be happy. "But presently," he said, "I reflected that all these things they would not let me do were things I ought not to do. I began to look at things in another way, and came to the conclusion that paternal government was a good thing, and that I liked living under it better than living in New York." This is the testimony of a New Yorker to the enforcement by law of such consideration for the feelings of the community as would be observed by considerate people. If some enactments of the kind were made in Canada, so as to prohibit preventible noises, there would be something done to relieve the waste of energy involved in living in cities.

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