

Rotary Luncheon

At the Rotary Luncheon held at Starling's Restaurant on Thursday, Chairman Rotarian "Will" Barker introduced Rev. Mr. Robinson who is associated with Dr. Morgan in his work. The usual musical programme was dispensed with out of respect for the dead in the recent motor tragedy.

Mr. Robinson gave a brilliant address on the fundamentals of Social Work, being fluent, versatile and entertaining. His fourteen years' experience in social service work has eminently fitted him to intelligently discuss and direct such work.

His description of the first impressions of those boys of tender years who are admitted to the Settlement Houses gave one a keen appreciation of the excellent work carried on by these institutions in helping, as one youth expressed it, to "give a feller a chance." The development of character is the most essential thing, and healthy, clean environments are necessary for its attainment. The housing problem in some sections is acute and required immediate consideration if the health and morals of the community were to be maintained. Some of his experiences in this connection were painful: in one City a ten room house was occupied by one hundred and thirty-six men, women and children. Congested, dirty streets and environments cannot develop the innate love of nature in the child. Some incidents in his experience were pitiful: one little chap, taken to a fresh air camp for the first time, hollered to his chum, "Say, Jimmie! come here! did you ever see such a lot of sky? I never saw so much in all my life." And yet another asked, "What are those yaller things up here, blinking at me?" He had never heard of the stars. Ensuring sufficient open space in the City is a movement along the right lines; children must play, and in this, the Rotary Club is doing excellent work in providing supervised playgrounds.

Every boy and girl has the right to be well born—to enter the world under sound healthy conditions. We have had to organize fights against impurity in the far Western Cities. In Quebec and Montreal the fight has been waged against graft and evil. The evil does fall to see the harm they do to others; to those who would correct them, they retort, "mind your own business." But, we realize that in America, sixty thousand people are blind, and of these, twelve thousand are blind because of the impurity of the father or mother. And yet they say "mind your own business." Liberty is here distorted; liberty is no such thing. I have a right to strike out with my fist, but, if my friend's nose is in close proximity I have no such right. Liberty of action should be compatible with the best interests of the community. A friend hailed a taxi at a Railway Station. The driver was under the influence of liquor. A collision occurred, my friend was killed. Has he the right to jeopardize lives? There are those who say "I have the right to live as I wish." They have no such privilege. Their life touches every other life, and so we are all bound together, and every good or bad man affects the community for good or ill. Communities are judged by the character of their citizens; and character is the essential factor. I have watched with great care many big systems for the reformation of society, but I have always come back to this main thought—character. I have seen systems of Church and other organizations made to help people by changing their surroundings, but as Sam Jones says, "If you put a pig into a parlor, it won't be the pig that will change." However, this like an epigram is rather sharp; clean surroundings will even have its effect on a pig. A change of environment, a little material assistance if necessary, helps to get people to think right. I have seen men who had slight contact with better environments, leave the slums and settle down in the quiet, attractive surroundings near a village. In a Doctor's surgery in Winnipeg I once saw a poor fellow under treatment. I discovered that he was longing for some one decent to talk to. There are very many in the world like this man, longing for decent influence. There are good points hidden in the hearts of the bad; an innate yearning for a better life, and if good influence is exerted upon them and their efforts guided along the right channels, the bad man very often becomes a powerful influence for good.

Rev. Mr. Robinson received the sincere thanks of the Rotary Club for his interesting address. The guests were, Rev. C. H. Johnson, Mr. J. J. Wyatt, Mr. C. P. Penny, Mr. A. Robertson.

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