

We want to do our work, to live our life first; and if there be any sins, or mistakes, either of omission or commission, which fight against this sin, we are anxious to avoid them.

The Causes that Shorten Human Life

The question has been brought forward prominently of late, by a paper on the avoidable causes which shorten human life, before a national gathering of life insurance experts. From the records of the insurance companies, with their millions of histories of life, illness and death, huge masses of data were collected bearing upon this or that "hazardous" occupation, this or that questionable habit, over-fatness or over-thinness, under-feeding or over-feeding. Upon this imposing basis, amounting in one category to something like 2,000,000 individual records, were based some fairly definite and plausible conclusions as to the things which men are doing which are shortening their lives. Either digging their graves deeper than necessary so that they will fall into them, with an uncomfortable bump, or tripping themselves into them before their time.

The inquiry covers so wide a range of human activity and interest that it furnishes an interesting and suggestive basis for the consideration of the ever-appealing problem: Can a man by doing this, or avoiding that, add a decade, or even half a decade, to his span of life? Broadly considered and regarding that hypothetical creature, the average man, or the community as a whole—there cannot be the slightest hesitation in answering emphatically, "Yes." For one of the most striking and unanimously attested facts in the realm of medical science and vital statistics is the rapid and continuous increase in the length of human life during the last half century.

Just to take the rough average of length of life, as determined by the crude age at death of those dying a given year, the almost incredible improvement has been effected from an average longevity of about thirty years in 1875 to one of a little over fifty-one years in 1915, in the United States. So that we may lay the consoling unction to our souls that whatever mistakes we may be making in detail, our original line of action has been sound and wholesome, and we are entitled to keep on taking it with a clear and hopeful conscience until further orders, or fresh

illumination is vouchsafed. We are wasting less of our time in grave-digging to-day than ever before in history.

The Gloomy View on an Insurance Expert

This our insurance expert seems to fail to recognize, if correctly reported, and although he does not go out of his way to be aggressively pessimistic, he leaves us undisturbed in the prevailing melancholy conviction that our nerves and our livers and our kidneys are going to pieces under the rack and strain of civilization, and that only vigorous action along the lines suggested by him can prevent a collapse of our civilization after the classic and terribly over-worked examples of Greece and Rome. Incidentally if what is rather vaguely known as "Western" or "Celtic-Teutonic" civilization lasts as long, makes as splendid a mark, leaves as superb monuments and claims upon human gratitude and has as good a time in doing it as either Greece or Rome, it will, in the language of the day, "have no kick coming." Even if it too, one day peters out and falls under the inevitable doom.

"Into the night go one and all," of which, however, there is not the slightest sign at present; quite the contrary, in fact. Civilization is no longer national, but world-wide, and depends upon no one nation, no one race, no one continent, for its continuance and health, but has a base as broad as the entire human species. Another significant omission from the general picture of our insurance expert's statement is that he makes no attempt whatever to explain the singular—and to the man in the street—puzzling paradox that while the average span of life has increased at this enormous rate and the average prevalence of disease decreased in almost the same ratio, there has been no substantial reduction in sixty years' time in the rates charged for insuring said human life. On the contrary, if any change has occurred, it has usually been in the direction of an increase, as nationwide organization was computed and "gentlemen's agreements" made more binding. The companies are still doing business at the old stand at the same old rates that were calculated, in one table forty years and in another sixty years ago, when the average longevity was thirty-three instead of fifty-one, as now, and the average death rate thirty, as against the present fifteen.

To be continued next issue



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Our Young Folks

Beside the Sea

I found two children standing
Beside the breaking sea,
I asked the two to tell me
The things that they could see.

"I see the rainbow shining
In every crested whirl;
I see the white gulls flashing,
Bright clouds and shells of pearl."

"And you?" I asked the other.
She gazed down at the sand;
"There's nothing here to look at
But water and some land."

They stood beside each other,
Yet they were worlds apart;
The one child saw but with her eyes,
The other, with her heart.

I found two children playing
Upon the warm beach-sand;
And one was listening to the sea,
The other dug in sand.

"What do you hear?" I asked them.
"I hear where music wells
From swell and lull and billow,
And distant deep-sea bells."

"I don't hear that," the other said,
And pushed away her toys;
"The waves came tumbling in so loud
I can't hear for the noise."

Our ears are made for hearing,
And do their useful part;
But it is best to listen
With both our ears and heart.

The Reason Why

"When I was at the party,"
Said Betty (aged just four),
"A little girl fell off her chair
Right down upon the floor;
And all the other little girls
Began to laugh but me—
I didn't laugh a single bit,"
Said Betty, seriously.

"Why not?" her mother asked her,
Full of delight to find
That Betty—bless her little heart!—
Had been so sweetly kind.
"Why didn't you laugh, darling?
Or don't you like to tell?"
"I didn't laugh," said Betty,
'Cause it was me that fell!"

Prizes

We have had splendid response to our prize offer. This month the prize for the best letter from a boy goes to a brave little lad nine years old, who sent us the picture of his mother. I want every boy and girl to read his letter. The boy's name is Cecil F. London, Mitchellton, Sask.

The girl's prize is awarded to Elsie Edinger, Holden, Alberta. I hope a teacher will soon be found for the school in her community. We are publishing the best letters. The letter by Grace Lathrop nearly won the prize. Every month a prize of two dollars is awarded to the best boy's letter and one to the best girl's letter.

Prize Letter

Holden, Alta., March 25, 1918
Dear Cousin Doris:—I am also a