

The Quiet Hour.

THE VALUE OF A HOME.

I have just been reading a book by Jacob A. Riis, called "The Peril and the Preservation of the Home." It is a fascinating book, as his writings always are, at least to one who is interested in city life amongst the poor, and I am going to give you some bits from it to-day. He begins by declaring that the home-loving peoples have been the strong peoples of all ages, and that the Romans were wise in setting their altars and their firesides together, and in making their holiest oath that by their "household gods." When instead of a fireside we got a hole in the floor and a hot-air register we lost "not only the lodestone that drew the scattered members of the family to a common focus, but with it went too often the old and holy sense of home: 'I and my house, we will serve the Lord.'"

One proof of the value of a home is the experience of a New York Foundling Hospital. Practically all the babies died while the attempt was made to bring them up in squads. Then the experiment was tried of placing them in homes. "The first year after that the mortality among them fell to a little over fifty per cent.; the second year it was just beyond thirty per cent., and the fourth it had fallen to ten and seven-tenths per cent. . . . What did it mean? It meant this, and nothing less, that these children had come at last to their rights; that every baby is entitled to one pair of mother's arms round its neck; that its God-given right is a home—a home; and that, when man robs it of that right, it will not stay. And small blame to it! It shows that even founding babies have good sense. They stayed, these, in such numbers—their death rate fell below the ordinary death rate of all the children of their age—because they were picked homes they were put into. It meant, friends, that God puts a little child in a home because He wants it to grow up with that as its most precious heritage; its spark of heaven that ever beckons it to its true home beyond. It means that you cannot herd human beings in battalions and expect them to develop the qualities of character that shall be the hope of to-morrow as well as the shelter of to-day." The writer goes on to describe the crowded tenement life which sends the children to the street as their only playground—these city children certainly do live on the street, playing and shouting there until late at night. They seldom go home, except to eat and sleep. Then a glimpse is given of homes where the children are locked while the mother goes to work in a factory, "locked in and left to the chance, the awful chance, of a fire in that tenement, with the children helpless to get out, and no one knowing of their plight."

Then the disappearance of the family altar is spoken of. "Hand to hand with the crowding of the home to the wall, has gone the crowding out of the things that make it the representative of heaven on earth; until now one seldom hears of family worship, so seldom that it almost gives one a start to be asked to join in family prayer. . . . It is my cherished privilege sometimes to break bread with a pious Jewish friend, and when I see the family gathered about his board giving thanks, a blush comes to my cheek—a blush for my own people. Whence the abiding strength of that marvellous people through all the centuries of persecution in the name of the Prince of Peace, but from the fact that they still hold to the God of their fathers in their homes?" Then the value of an optimistic outlook is shown, and Christ is declared to have been the great optimist of all ages. Riis goes on to say: "I learned something when I was last in Denmark, where they make butter for a living, and where they have two kinds of Christians—the happy Christians, as they are called, and the 'hell preachers.' I learned there that if you want good butter you must buy it of the happy Christians; they make the best. So it is in all things in the world—the happy Christians make it go round." Here is a story showing how a man may do deadly mischief and still be considered pious and respectable. A certain Quaker built houses for the poor, and the houses—at least in his own opinion—of the

lack of human kindness was soured in him when his neighbor, the alderman, knocked him down in a quarrel over the dividing line between their lots. It was against the Quaker's principles to fight, but he found a way of paying off his enemy that is a whole volume of commentaries on graceless human nature; he built a tenement upon his own lot right on the line, and with a big dead wall so close to his neighbor's windows that his tenants could get neither sun nor air. They lived in darkness ever after. The fact that, for want of access, his house was useless and stood idle for years, did

have been content to live in such a place without a loud outcry." If one way to prevent drunkenness is to give every man a clean and comfortable home, surely such shanties must be hotbeds of drunkenness.

Then another sad picture of homelessness is given—the almshouse on Blackwell's Island, where seventeen hundred old women, homeless and hopeless in their great age, were waiting for their last ride in the charity boat to the trench in the Potter's Field, which would be the last home on earth for their tired bodies. Think of the pitifulness of such



The Plains of Abraham, Showing Wolfe's Monument, Marking the Spot Where Gen. Wolfe Fell.

(It was on this plain that the military review and pageants were held during the Tercentenary.)

not stay his revenge. That old Quaker was a hater from 'way back. His 'wall of wrath,' as I used to call it, killed more innocent babes and cursed more lives than any other work of man I ever heard of. One wonders what that man's dreams were at night. The mere thought of it used to give me the shivers, and I never slept so sweetly as the night when I had seen that wall laid low by wreckers whom I had set on." And yet probably that man thought himself very saintly, and would have been terribly shocked if anyone had accused him of murdering innocent children. How different are the cool country homes, with all the air and light needed to make the children strong and rosy. In the city there are often breathless days and nights which make the people, crowded

an old age, you who have the dear privilege of caring for an aged mother or father! Oh, let them feel that they are treasured inmates of real homes, that their welcome is not worn out, that the hearts of all the family are tender towards them, and the hands of the young and strong are always ready to serve them. An uncared-for childhood is very sad, but this is the children's age, and many hands are stretched out to care for those who are neglected by their parents. But, to my mind, it is almost more pitifully sad to see someone neglected in old age. And the care of the old has a beauty all its own. Not long ago I saw a queer little old man helping a bent, crippled old woman up a public stairway. He was thinking only of her, stopping every step or two to straighten



View Showing Citadel, Docks, Chateau Frontenac and Dufferin Terrace.

into close little rooms in tenement houses, understand something of the horror of the Black Hole of Calcutta. Think of a "home" where the family teakettle was regularly used as a wash-boiler! Some of the "homes" described in the book I am quoting from were shanties, built of old boards and discarded roof tin, where people lived who had been crowded out of the tenements, and "the cat collector did not miss them. They paid regularly for their piggeries. I feel like apologizing to the pig—no pig would

her antiquated bonnet, or to pull her shawl straight over her crooked shoulders. The poor old couple were comically ugly, and yet there was a beauty in that old man's devotion that must have given joy to the angels and touched the heart of the tender Master of us all. They were Jews, who cared nothing for Him. What of that! They were rich in love, and, I am very sure, very dear to Him.

But we must return to Riis. He describes a tenement-house block in New York, where, a very few years ago, near-

ly 3,000 people were living. There was one bath-tub in that block; it had been brought by a hopeful immigrant, and he was forced to hang it in the air-shaft, where it was probably of little value. How could anyone make much use of a bath when living in crowded rooms? There were more than 400 dark rooms in the block, with no windows at all, and more than 600 with windows opening only on the chimney-like slit in the high building, which is supposed to be an air-shaft. But the necessity for having real homes, if real people of any worth are to grow up in the big cities, made itself felt, and model tenements are in existence now. In the Riverside tenements "it is much better to live on the yard than in front, because you have a garden, and you have flowers and even a bandstand, where the band plays sometimes at the landlord's expense." The stairs in the tenements are almost invariably dark. Even the newly-built flat house in which I live—it contains only five families—has stairways that are almost dark, though a few months ago the law compelled the landlord to put "lights" over the doors on the landing. That makes a little light. Riis says: "I went up the dark stairs in one of those tenements, and there I trod upon a baby. It is the regular means of introduction to a tenement-house baby in the old dark houses, but I never have been able to get used to it. . . . I do not marvel much at the showing of the Glider Tenement-house Committee, that one in five of the children in the rear tenements into which the sunlight never comes was killed by the house. It seemed strange, rather, that any survived. But they do, and as soon as they are able they take to the street, which is thenceforth their training ground." The marvel of it is that such fine children emerge so often from such unlikely soil.

"From alleys where the sunlight never enters comes that growing procession that fills our prisons; where the sunlight does not enter, seeds of darkness naturally belong." If that is true, the people living in the open country ought to be very good. But the evils of overcrowding are working their own cure. Things had got to the worst and must begin to mend. It was found that "the slum landlord must stop building houses that kill his tenants; that murder is murder, whether it is done with an axe or with a house."

After this slight glimpse of the way many of your brothers and sisters live in the great cities, surely you will thank God for the sweet cleanliness of your bright, airy homes. I have not given you any of the darkest pictures in the book—they are better imagined than described. HOPE.

Current Events.

Mylus Erichsen, the Danish explorer, and two companions, have been frozen to death in Greenland.

Lord Roberts and his daughter, Lady Elleen, sailed for home by the Empress of Britain on August 7th.

Japan has made arrangements for the building of sixteen new warships. This addition will place the Japanese navy third among the navies of the world.

The cruiser Indomitable, bearing the Prince of Wales home from the Tercentenary, arrived at Portsmouth at 9.40 p.m. August 2nd, having averaged a speed of 25 knots on the voyage.

The list of victims of the forest fires which devastated the British Columbia towns, Fernie and Coal Creek, has been placed at upwards of 90, and the financial loss in Fernie alone at about \$5,000,000. Supplies are being rushed in to the stricken district from every part of the Dominion.

Count Zeppelin's airship made a successful twelve-hour flight from Friedrichshafen on August 4th. Its