

"Clergymen may lament the fact that boys and girls paraded the streets each evening, and may declare that home is the best place for them. Theoretically home is the best place, but these boys and girls are only responding to a very human need. To desire brightness or fresh air, or companionship when dull and tired, was just as natural as to desire food when hungry. The streets, to those girls and lads, were brighter and healthier than their own so-called homes. Often a walk on the streets was the only recreation they had after a day's work in a factory. Some time ago a girl of about fifteen years of age was before the juvenile court for some trifling misconduct on the streets at night. The girl's mother, an honest, hard-working charwoman, was present in court, and the judge had ventured to suggest to her that she ought to keep the young daughter home in the evenings. "Ah, sir," said the mother sadly, "if you saw our poor dull home, with its couple of rooms, you wouldn't blame my girl for wanting to go out at night. She works hard in———'s factory all day, and she must have fresh air, sometime, somewhere."

The judge felt that the mother's rebuke was just. He had seen some habitations in Halifax, which were mere cubby-holes, where there was no privacy, and where a young girl would not care to have a visitor. It is ghastly mockery to call such places by the sweet name of "Home." Was it any wonder that sometimes girls or boys, weary of the monotony of humdrum labor in factories all day, and obliged to live in such habitations at night, went astray, and that their parents succumbed to intemperance? It was amazing to him that so many of them kept in the straight path, in spite of environment. * * * * It was high time for the citizens of Halifax to be practical on this question. Let our citizens do something besides "lamenting" delinquency and poverty. Instead of "deploring" evils, let us try to cure them, and let us, temporarily, cease exhorting the poorer classes to avoid crime, but aid them to avoid it. We must get beyond merely "pointing out" the evils, and vigorously support a plan for remedying them. The rents for some of the poorer habitations were shamefully high, and, with the other items in the cost of living, prevented some poor men from maintaining a decent family life. The speaker said he was not a socialist, but he would look with favor upon legislation which would fix a minimum wage for men and women and boys and girls and, if practicable, a maximum rent."

In the year 1917 fresh interest in the housing problem was aroused by the offer of a leading citizen who agreed to purchase a tract of land and present it as a gift to a company, if duly organized, which would erect a number of modern cottages upon it, to meet the needs of a class in the city, then