

NEEDLESS NOISES—EFFECTS OF NOISES ON THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

ETYMOLOGISTS have been puzzled to account for the origin of the word "noise." By some it is referred to *nausea*; by others to *noxia*. These are both Latin words signifying something either unpleasant or harmful. Noise has, therefore, rather a bad reputation.

Considering the high value, both as a preventive and curative, universally attributed to perfect quiet, sleep and rest for the nervous system, which in man is so highly developed, it is very singular that greater efforts are not put forth to suppress the many needless noises heard almost everywhere, not only in cities but in the smaller towns and villages.

Of "the new diseases that human life evolves in its progress," various forms of nervous irritability and weakness are distinctly traceable to noise. "The slow and almost insensible influence of noise on the nervous system tends to wear and break it down. Neuralgia, stimulant-craving, restlessness, and over-alertness of a purposeless character commonly known as 'fidgets,' are some of the evils directly caused by it." These evils are doubtless commonly intensified by inheritance in the next generation. While many on a sick bed have been deprived of sleep and rest and so hurried on to death by needless noises.

Any one who has once had the misfortune to be ill in bed near a railway will probably find that the shrieks of the diabolical whistles will haunt his memory to the end of his life. It is difficult to refrain from the belief that engine-drivers revel in the hideous sounds they produce, and wreak their vengeance upon a society which keeps them from their night's repose by determining that while they are at work nobody in all the country around shall sleep. But the railway is not always the worst source of noise. There are factories which employ a steam horn or "devil," which helps to make night, mid-day and early morning hideous. Then there is the incessant clatter of traffic on the stone paved streets. About the time this ceases and the street cars cease to run, places of amusement and

saloons pour forth their life, and youths and intoxicated revellers wend their homeward way with loud talking, songs and shouts. Dogs and cats often keep up the racket until soon the milkman and newsboy in the early morning connect the endless chain of noise again with the clatter of the street traffic. And so it goes on and life is not only rendered miserable from want of refreshing sleep, but is incalculably shortened.

These abominable worries might all be prevented by a little well directed effort. The night as well as the Sabbath should and could be made a period of rest, absolute, quiet rest. It is most singular that these nuisances are tolerated as they are, and so much of life made wretched. At the last meeting of the British Medical Association it was unanimously resolved to memorialise the leading railway companies drawing their attention to the injurious effects of their over-much whistling. Protests and pressure might soon reduce railway noises to a minimum. Municipal authorities could easily stop the factory "demon," perhaps the most useless, wanton noise of all. To lessen the noise of street traffic to be sure more costly pavements would be required; but in this we could spend money to better advantage than in procuring many of the more costly luxuries of life. The police could soon, if properly instructed and trained, stop most of the other needless noises of city and town. Strong protests against all these unnecessary, loud, discordant sounds, by the press, would help immeasurably to lessen and prevent them.

THE average age at death of the Jews is said to be forty-nine years while that of the Christian is but thirty-seven. Only two per cent. of that race follow agriculture; the great majority of them are town dwellers. But their sobriety, domestic and personal cleanliness, and the great care they bestow upon themselves and their families, act heavily in their favor.