CHAPTER XV.

HEALTHY HOMES.

"The best security for civilization is the dwelling." DISRAELI.

"Cleanliness is the elegance of the poor."—*English Proverb.*

"Sanitas sanitatum, et omnia sanitas."—JULIUS MENOCHIUS.

"Virtue never dwelt long with filth and nastiness."—COUNT RUMFORD.

"More servants wait on Man
Than he'll take notice of: in every path
He treads down that which doth befriend him
When sickness makes him pale and wan."—
GEORGE HERBERT.

HEALTH is said to be wealth. Indeed, all wealth is valueless without health. Every man who lives by labor, whether of mind or body, regards health as one of the most valuable of possessions. Without it, life would be unenjoyable. The human system has been so framed as to render enjoyment one of the principal ends of physical life. The whole arrangement, structure, and functions of the human system are beautifully adapted for that purpose.

The exercise of every sense is pleasurable—the exercise of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and muscular effort. What can be more pleasurable, for instance, than the feeling of entire health—health which is the sum total of the functions of life, duly performed? "Enjoyment," says Dr. Southwood Smith, "is not only the end of life, but it is the only condition of life which is compatible with a protracted term of existence. The

happier a human being is, the longer he lives; the more he suffers, the sooner he dies. To add to enjoyment is to lengthen life; to inflict pain is to shorten its duration."

Happiness is the rule of healthy existence; pain and misery are its exceptional conditions. Nor is pain altogether an evil; it is rather a salutary warning. It tells us that we have transgressed some rule, violated some law, disobeyed some physical obligation. It is a monitor which warns us to amend our state of living. It virtually says, "Return to Nature, observe her laws, and be restored to happiness." Thus, paradoxical though it may seem, pain is one of the conditions of the physical well-being of man; as death, according to Dr. Thomas Brown, is one of the conditions of the enjoyment of life.

To enjoy physical happiness, therefore, the natural laws must be complied with. To discover and observe these laws, man has been endowed with the gift of reason. Does he fail to exercise this gift—does he neglect to comply with the law of his being—then pain and disease are the necessary consequence.

Man violates the laws of nature in his own person, and he suffers accordingly. He is idle, and overfeeds himself: he is punished by gout, indigestion, or apoplexy. He drinks too much: he becomes bloated, trembling, and weak; his appetite falls off, his strength declines, his constitution decays, and he falls a victim to the numerous diseases which haunt the steps of the drunkard.

Society suffers in the same way. It leaves districts undrained and streets uncleaned. Masses of the population are allowed to live crowded together in unwholesome dens, half poisoned by the mephitic air of the neighborhood. Then a fever breaks out, or a chol-

era, or a plague. Disease spreads from the miserable abodes of the poor into the comfortable homes of the rich carrying, death and devastation before it. The misery and suffering incurred in such cases are nothing less than willful, inasmuch as the knowledge necessary to avert them is within the reach of all.

Wherever any number of persons live together, the atmosphere becomes poisoned, unless means be provided for its constant change and renovation. If there be not sufficient ventilation, the air becomes charged with carbonic acid, principally the product of respiration. Whatever the body discharges, becomes poison to the body if introduced again through the lungs. Hence the immense importance of pure air. A deficiency of food may be considerably less injurious than a deficiency of pure air. Every person above fourteen years of age requires about six hundred cubic feet of shut-up space to breathe in during the twenty-four hours. If he sleeps in a room of smaller dimensions, he will suffer more or less, and gradually approach the condition of being smothered.

Shut up a mouse in a glass receiver, and it will gradually die by rebreathing its own breath. Shut up a man in a confined space, and he will die in the same way. The English soldiers expired in the Black Hole of Calcutta because they wanted pure air. Thus about half the children born in some manufacturing towns die before they are five years old, principally because they want pure air. Humboldt tells of a sailor who was dying of fever in the close hold of a ship. His comrades brought him out of his hold to die in the open air. Instead of dying, he revived, and eventually got well. He was cured by the pure air.

The most common result of breathing impure air,

among adults, is fever. The heaviest municipal tax, said Dr. Southwood Smith, is the *fever tax.* It is estimated that in Liverpool some seven thousand persons are yearly attacked by fever, of whom about five hundred die. Fever usually attacks persons of between twenty and thirty, or those who generally have small families depending upon them for support. Hence deaths from fever, by causing widowhood and orphanage, impose a very heavy tax upon the inhabitants of all the large manufacturing towns. Dr. Playfair, after carefully considering the question, is of opinion that the total pecuniary loss inflicted on the county of Lancashire from *preventible* disease, sickness, and death amounts to not less than five millions sterling annually. But this is only the physical and pecuniary loss. The moral loss is infinitely greater

Where are now the "happy humble swains" and the "gentle shepherds" of the old English poets? At the present time, they are nowhere to be found. The modern Strephon and Phyllis are a very humble pair, living in a clay-floored cottage, and maintaining a family on from twelve to fifteen shillings a week. And so far from Strephon spending his time in sitting by a purling stream playing "roundelays" upon a pipe—poor fellow! he can scarcely afford to smoke one, his hours of labor are so long, and his wages are so small. As for Daphnis, he is a lout, and can neither read nor write; nor is his Chloe any better.

Phineas Fletcher thus sung of "The Shepherd's Home:"

"Thrice, oh, thrice happie shepherd's life and state!
When courts are happinesse, unhappie pawns!
His cottage low, and safely humble gate,
Shuts out proud Fortune, with her scorns and fawns:
No feared treason breaks his quiet sleep;
Singing all day, his flocks he learns to keep;
Himself as innocent as are his simple sheep.

"His certain life, that never can deceive him,
Is full of thousand sweets and rich content.
The smooth-leaved beeches in the field receive him
With coolest shades, till noontide's rage is spent:
His life is neither tost in boist'rous seas
Of troublous world, nor lost in slothful ease;
Pleased and full blest he lives, when he his God can please."

Where, oh where, has this gentle shepherd gone? Have spinning-jennies swallowed him up? Alas! as was observed by Mrs. Harris, "there's no sich'n person." Did he *ever* exist? We have a strong suspicion that he never did, save in the imaginations of poets.

Before the age of railroads and sanitary reformers, the pastoral life of the Arcadians was a beautiful myth. The Blue-book men have exploded it forever. The agricultural laborers have not decent houses—only miserable huts—to live in. They have but few provisions for cleanliness or decency. Two rooms for sleeping and living in are all that the largest family can afford. Sometimes they have only one. The day-room, in addition to the family contains the cooking utensils, the washing-apparatus, agricultural implements, and dirty-clothes. In the sleeping apartment, the parents and their children, boys and girls, are indiscriminately mixed, and frequently a lodger sleeps in the same and only room, which has generally no window—the openings in the half-thatched roof admitting light, and exposing the family to every vicissitude of the weather. The husband, having no comfort at home, seeks it in the beer-shop. The children grow up without decency or self-restraint. As for the half-hearted wives and daughters, their lot is very miserable.

It is not often that village affairs are made the subject of discussion in newspapers, for the power of the press has not yet reached remote country places. But we do hear occasionally of whole villages being pulled down and razed, in order to prevent them "becoming nests of beggars' brats." A member of Parliament did not hesitate to confess before a Parliamentary committee that he "had pulled down between twenty-six and thirty cottages, which, had they been left standing, would have been inhabited by young married couples." And what becomes of the dispossessed? They crowd together in the cottages which are left standing, if their owners will allow it; or they crowd into the work-houses; or, more generally, they crowd into the towns, where there is at least some hope of employment for themselves and their children.

Our manufacturing towns are not at all what they ought to be; not sufficiently pure, wholesome, or well-regulated. But the rural laborers regard even the misery of towns as preferable to the worse misery of the rural districts; and year by year they crowd into the seats of manufacturing industry in search of homes and employment. This speaks volumes as to the actual state of our "boasted peasantry, their country's pride."

The intellectual condition of the country laborers seems to be on a par with their physical state. Those in the Western counties are as little civilized as the poor people in the east of London. A report of the Diocesan Board of the county of Hereford states that "a great deal of the superstition of past ages lingers in our parishes. The observation of lucky and unlucky days and seasons is by no means unusual; the phases of the moon are regarded with great respect—in one, medicine may be taken, in another, it is advisable to kill a pig; over the doors of many houses may be found twigs placed crosswise, and never suffered to lose their cruciform position, and the horseshoe preserves its old station on many a stable-door. Charms are devoutly believed in; a ring made from a shilling,

offered at the communion, is an undoubted cure for fits; hair plucked from the crop on an ass's shoulder and woven into a chain, to be put round a child's neck, is powerful for the same purpose; and the hand of a corpse applied to the neck is believed to disperse a wen. The 'evil eye,' so long dreaded in uneducated countries, has its terrors among us; and if a person of ill life be suddenly called away, they are generally some who hear his 'tokens,' or see his ghost. There exists, besides, the custom of communicating deaths to hives of bees, in the belief that they invariably abandon their owners if the intelligence be withheld."

Sydney Smith has said, with more truth than elegance, that in the infancy of all nations, even the most civilized, men lived the life of pigs; and if sanitary reporters had existed in times past as they do now, we should doubtless have received an account of the actual existence and domestic accommodation of the old English "swains and "shepherds," very different from that given by Phineas Fletcher. Even the mechanics of this day are more comfortably lodged than the great landed gentry of the Saxon and Norman periods; and if the truth could be got at, it would be found that, bad as is the state of our agricultural laborers now, the condition of their forefathers was no better.

The first method of raising a man above the life of an animal is to provide him with a healthy home. The home is, after all, the best school for the world. Children grow up into men and women there; they imbibe their best and their worst morality there; and their morals and intelligence are in a great measure well or ill trained there. Men can only be really and truly humanized and civilized through the institution of the home. There are domestic purity and moral life in the good home, and individual defilement and moral death in the bad one.

The school-master has really very little to do with the formation of the characters of children. These are formed in the home by the father and mother—by brothers, sisters, and companions. It does not matter how complete may be the education given in schools. It may include the whole range of knowledge: yet if the scholar is under the necessity of daily returning to a home which is indecent, vicious, and miserable, all this learning will prove of comparatively little value. Character and disposition are the result of home training; and if these are, through bad physical and moral conditions, deteriorated and destroyed, the intellectual culture acquired in the school may prove an instrumentality for evil rather than for good.

The home should not be considered merely as an eating and sleeping place; but as a place where self-respect may be preserved, and comfort secured, and domestic pleasures enjoyed. Three-fourths of the petty vices which degrade society, and swell into crimes which disgrace it, would shrink before the influence of self-respect. To be a place of happiness, exercising beneficial influences upon its members, and especially upon the children growing up within it, the home must be pervaded by the spirit of comfort, cleanliness, affection, and intelligence. And in order to secure this, the presence of a well-ordered, industrious, and educated woman, is indispensable. So much depends upon the woman, that we might almost pronounce the happiness or unhappiness of the home to be woman's work. No nation can advance except through the improvement of the nation's homes; and they can only be improved through the instrumentality of women. They must *know* how to make homes comfortable; and before they can know, they must have been taught.

Women must, therefore, have sufficient training to fit them for their duties in real life. Their education should be conducted throughout with a view to their

future position as wives, mothers, and housewives. But among all classes, even the highest, the education of girls is rarely conducted with this object. Among the working-people, the girls are sent out to work, among the higher classes, they are sent out to learn a few flashy accomplishments; and men are left to pick from them, very often with little judgment, the future wives and mothers of England.

Men themselves attach little or no importance to the intelligence or industrial skill of women; and they only discover their value when they find their homes stupid and cheerless. Men are caught by the glance of a bright eye, by a pair of cherry cheeks, by a handsome figure; and when they "fall in love," as the phrase goes, they never bethink them of whether the "loved one" can mend a shirt or cook a pudding. And yet the most sentimental of husbands must come down from his "ecstatics" so soon as the knot is tied; and then he soon enough finds out that the clever hands of a woman are worth far more than her bright glances; and if the shirt and pudding qualifications be absent, then woe to the unhappy man, and woe also to the unhappy woman! If the substantial element of physical comfort be absent from the home, it soon becomes hateful; the wife, notwithstanding all her good looks, is neglected; and the public-house separates those whom the law and the church have joined together.

Men are really desperately ignorant respecting the home department. If they thought for a moment of its importance, they would not be so ready to rush into premature housekeeping. Ignorant men select equally ignorant women for their wives; and these introduce into the world families of children whom they are utterly incompetent to train as rational or domestic beings. The home is no home, but a mere lodging, and often a very comfortless one.

We speak not merely of the poorest laborers, but of the best-paid workmen in the large manufacturing towns. Men earning from two to three pounds a week —or more than the average pay of curates and bankers' clerks—though spending considerable amounts on beer, will often grudge so small a part of their income as half a crown a week to provide decent homes for themselves and their children. What is the consequence? They degrade themselves and their families. They crowd together, in foul neighborhoods, into dwellings possessing no element of health or decency; where even the small rental which they pay is in excess of the accommodation they receive. The results are inevitable—loss of self-respect, degradation of intelligence, failure of physical health, and premature death. Even the highest-minded philosopher, placed in such a situation, would gradually gravitate toward brutality. But the amount thus saved, or rather not expended on house-rent, is not economy; it is reckless waste. The sickness caused by the bad dwelling involves frequent interruptions of work, and drains upon the savings-bank or the benefit society; and a final and rapid descent to the poor-rates. Though the loss to the middle and upper classes is great, the loss is not for a moment to be compared with that which falls upon the working-classes themselves, through their neglect in providing wholesome and comfortable dwellings for their families. It is, perhaps, not saying too much to aver that one-half the money expended by benefit societies in large towns may be set down as pecuniary loss arising from bad and unhealthy homes.

But there is a worse consequence still. The low tone of physical health thereby produced is one of the chief causes of drunkenness. Mr. Chadwick once remonstrated with an apparently sensible workman on

the expenditure of half his income on whisky. His reply was, "Do you, sir, come and live here, and you will drink whisky too." Mr. Lee says: "I would not be understood that habits of intoxication are *wholly* due to a defective sanitary condition; but no person can have the experience I have had without coming to the conclusion that *unhealthy* and unhappy homes—loss of *vital* and consequently of *industrial* energy, and a consciousness of inability to control external circumstances—induce thousands to escape from miserable depression in the temporary excitement of noxious drugs and intoxicating liquors. They are like the seaman who struggle for a while against the evils by which they are surrounded, but at last, seeing no hope, stupefy themselves with drink, and perish."

It may be said, in excuse, that working-people must necessarily occupy such houses as are to be had, and pay the rental asked for them, bad and unwholesome though they be. But there is such a thing as supply and demand; and the dwellings now supplied are really those which are most in demand, because of their lowness of rental. Were the working-classes to shun unwholesome districts and low-priced dwellings, and rent only such tenements as were calculated to fulfill the requirements of a wholesome and cleanly home, the owners of property would be compelled to improve the character of their houses, and raise them to the required standard of comfort and accommodation. The real remedy must lie with the working-classes themselves. Let them determine to raise their standard of rental, and the reform is in a great measure accomplished.

We have already shown how masters have done a great deal for the better accommodation of their work-people; how the benefactors of the poor, such as Mr.

Peabody and Lady Burdett Coutts, have promoted the building of healthy homes. Yet the result must depend upon the individual action of the working-classes themselves. When they have the choice of living in a dwelling situated in a healthy locality, and of another situated in an unhealthy locality, they ought to choose the former. But very often they do not. There is perhaps a difference of sixpence a week in the rental, and, not knowing the advantages of health, they take the unhealthy dwelling because it is the cheapest. But the money that sickly people have to pay for physic, doctors' bills, and loss of wages, far more than exceeds the amount saved by cheaper rental, not to speak of the loss of comfort, the want of cleanliness, and the depression of spirits which is inevitable where foul air is breathed.

To build a wholesome dwelling costs little more than to build an unwholesome one. What is wanted on the part of the builder are, a knowledge of sanitary conditions, and a willingness to provide the proper accommodation. The space of ground covered by the dwelling is the same in both cases; the quantity of bricks and mortar need be no greater; and pure air is of the same price as foul air. Light costs nothing.

A healthy home, presided over by a thrifty, cleanly woman, may be the abode of comfort, of virtue, and of happiness. It may be the scene of every ennobling relation in family life. It may be endeared to a man by many delightful memories—by the affectionate voices of his wife, his children, and his neighbors. Such a home will be regarded, not as a mere nest of common instinct, but as a training-ground for young immortals a sanctuary for the heart, a refuge from storms, a sweet resting-place after labor, a consolation in sorrow, a pride in success, and a joy at all times.

Much has been done to spread the doctrines of sanitary science. There is no mystery attached to it; otherwise we should have had professors teaching it in colleges, and graduates practicing it among the people. It is only of recent years that it has received a nominal recognition; and we owe it, not to the medical faculty, but to a barrister, that it has received general recognition, and been embodied in many important acts of Parliament.

Edwin Chadwick has not yet received ordinary justice from his contemporaries. Though he has been one of the most indefatigable and successful workers of the age, and has greatly influenced the legislation of his time, he is probably less known than many a fourth-rate Parliamentary talker.

Mr. Chadwick belongs to a Lancashire family, and was born near Manchester. He received his education chiefly in London. Having chosen the law for his profession, he was enrolled a student of the Inner Temple in his twenty-sixth year. There he "eat his way" to the bar, maintaining himself by reporting and writing for the daily press. He was not a man of any extraordinary amount of learning; but he was a sagacious and persevering man. He was ready to confront any amount of labor in prosecuting an object, no matter how remote its attainment might at first sight appear to be.

At an early period in his career, Edwin Chadwick became possessed by an idea. It is a great thing to be thoroughly possessed by an idea, provided its aim and end be beneficent. It gives a color and bias to the whole of a man's life. The idea was not a new one; but being taken up by an earnest, energetic, and hard-working man, there was some hope for the practical working-out of his idea in the actual life of humanity. It was neither more nor less than the sanitary idea—the germ of the sanitary movement.

We must now briefly state how he worked his way to its practical realization. It appears that Mr. Morgan, the Government actuary, had stated before a Parliamentary committee, that though the circumstances of the middle classes had improved, their "expectation of life" had not lengthened. This being diametrically opposed to our student's idea, he endeavored to demonstrate the fallacy of the actuary's opinion. He read up and sifted numerous statistical documents—blue-books, life-tables, and population-tables. He bored his way through the cumberous pile, and brought an accumulation of facts from the most unlooked-for quarters, for the purpose of illustrating his idea and elucidating his master-thought.

The result was published in the *Westminster Review* for April, 1828. Mr. Chadwick demonstrated, by an immense array of facts and arguments, that the circumstances which surround human beings *must* have an influence upon their health; that health *must* improve with an improvement of these circumstances; that many of the diseases and conditions unfavorable to human life were under man's control, and capable of being removed; that the practice of vaccination, the diminution of hard drinking among the middle and upper classes, the increase of habits of cleanliness, the improvements in medical science, and the better construction of streets and houses, *must*, according to all medical and popular experience, have contributed, *a priori*, to lengthen life; and these he proved by a citation of facts from numerous authentic sources. In short, Mr. Morgan was wrong. The "expectancy of life," as is now universally admitted, has improved and is rapidly improving among the better classes; but it

was never thoroughly demonstrated until Edwin Chadwick undertook the discussion of the question.

Another article, which Mr. Chadwick published in the *London Review* in 1829, on "Preventive Police," was read by Jeremy Bentham, then in his eighty-second year, who so much admired it that he craved an introduction to the writer. The consequence was the formation of a friendship that lasted without interruption until the death of the philosopher in 1832. Mr. Bentham wished to engage the whole of his young friend's time in assisting him with the preparation of his "Administrative Code," and he offered to place him in independent circumstances if he would devote himself exclusively to the advancement of his views. The offer was, however, declined.

Mr. Chadwick completed his law studies, and was called to the bar in November, 1830. He was preparing to enter upon the practice of common law, occasionally contributing articles to the *Westminster*, when he was, in 1832, appointed a commissioner, in conjunction with Dr. Southwood Smith and Mr. Tooke, to investigate the question of factory labor, which Lord Ashley and Mr. Saddler were at that time strongly pressing upon public attention. The sanitary idea again found opportunity for expression in the report of the commission, which referred to "defective drainage, ventilation, water supply," and the like, as causes of disease—acting, concurrently with excessive toil, to depress the health and shorten the lives of the factory population.

In the same year (1832) an important commission of inquiry was appointed by Lord Grey's government in reference to the operation of the poor-laws in England and Wales. Mr. Chadwick was appointed one of the assistant commissioners, for the purpose of taking evidence on the subject; and the districts of London and Berkshire were allotted to him. His report, published in the following year, was a model of what a report should be. It was full of information, admirably classified and arranged, and was so racy, by virtue of the facts brought to light, and the care taken to preserve the very words of the witnesses as they were spoken, that the report may be read with interest by the most inveterate enemy of blue-books.

Mr. Chadwick showed himself so thoroughly a master of the subject, his suggestions were so full of practical value, that he was, shortly after the publication of the report, advanced from the post of assistant commissioner to that of chief commissioner; and he largely shared, with Mr. Senior, in the labors and honors of the commissioners' report submitted to the House of Commons in 1834, and also in the famous Poor-law Amendment Act passed in the same year, in which the recommendations of the commissioners were substantially adopted and formalized.

One may venture to say now, without fear of contradiction, that that law was one of the most valuable that has been placed on the statute-book in modern times. And yet no law proved more unpopular than this was for years after it had been enacted. But Mr. Chadwick never ceased to have perfect faith in the soundness of the principles on which it was based, and he was indefatigable in defending and establishing it. It has been well said that "to become popular is an easy thing; but to do unpopular justice—that requires a man." And Edwin Chadwick is the man who has never failed in courage to do the right thing, even though it should prove to be the unpopular thing.

While burrowing amidst the voluminous evidence on the poor-laws, Mr. Chadwick never lost sight of