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THE DEFENDERS OF SLUMS AND TENEMENTS A NEW FRONTIER WHERE IMMIGRANT LIFE IS WASTED

CLINTON W. GILBERT in the New York Evening Post recently described the American city slum as "the new frontier of American life." His contention that "it is in the slum that the struggle with the elements, the battle merely to live is the hardest" is undisputably true. If his conclusions are that the struggle for life, common in the slums, tends to quicken the finer emotions of life, virtues without which commendable success in life cannot be attained, then his conclusions are grossly misleading.

It is true that there are men and women who have not alone come untainted out of the slums, but who have given the slum and its evil atmosphere, containing an abundance of soul and body deteriorating conditions, credit for the urge generated within by which they achieved success in life, many of them having become builders of better lives.

Nevertheless it is equally true that the slum with its deteriorating influences is a condition of living that virtually destroys the finer sensibilities with which human life is endowed.

If the slum can be called a new frontier then it certainly can not compare with the old frontier—the virgin country with forest-clad hills, broad planes and mountain cascades towering above sheltered valleys and dales where the early Americans—immigrants and native born—struggled for a higher plane of living. Their thoughts and actions have become monuments and markers along the road of citizenship, pointing the way to an acceptable standard of American life.

The picture will never fit the slum, even at its best, no matter how flexible the imagination may be. The slum: the crowded tenement places, where live these families, men, women and children, married and unmarried people, who toil hard for an existence, is not the setting for that cheerfulness of life that is as

necessary to a human being as sunshine is to the flower, if it is to attain the unfolding made possible by the creative source.

The slum with its setting is void of the background that is required for character building. Like a flower that buds on the rim of a waste depository where a ray of sunshine from the purer realms have touched the vitals of its generative source, so may a rugged character, even a romantic figure, rise and emerge from the slums. But for all that the slum can be little if anything else than what it has been, unless the slum is so changed that it is no longer a slum, save in the fantasy of an overzealous writer.

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The glowing fantasy picture of the slum, drawn by Mr. Gilbert, furnishes the Foreign Language Information Service, the text for a bold sermon on the value of the new frontier, the slum, picturing it as a reservoir of real values, where the manhood and womanhood of America of tomorrow are in the making. The argument in favor of the slum presented in the monthly Bulletin issued by these foreign language preceptors reads in part as follows:

No one should be surprised at this reference (The New Frontier) to the modern city slum, crowded, overworked and threatened by privation, as a place comparable with the old outposts of civilization. The slum is not lovely with virgin forests and green prairies, but neither was the old frontier lovely to those who knew it when blizzards buried their huts under ice and snow, when drought burned the prairie to a crisp and savage men or beasts appeared to complete the work of devastation. Nevertheless, with wife and children near and a free opportunity at hand to exercise the gifts within, your old settler saw beauty in the desert. And it is the freedom they have found or hope to find for themselves and their offspring in the new wilderness of a crowded city that makes mothers and fathers sigh contentedly as they view the far array of littered tenements and hear a dozen languages rise in confusion from the narrow streets.

During the last century native and foreign born Americans