MULTITUDES LIVE AND DIE IN PUBLIC

NEW YORK'S TENEMENT HOUSE POPULATION KNOWS NO PRIVACY FROM BIRTH TO DEATH

SUMMER is taking heavy toll this season of the children of New York's hideous tenement-house sections. It is hardly possible to walk a block without seeing a white crape streamer hanging from the common entrance to a barracks. In some of the crowded blocks every other door flaunts one.

To the stranger this is, no doubt, the most shocking sight to be seen in those sections filled with unusual sights. For the crowding that robs the living of all the little privacies that more fortunate human beings hold sacred robs death still more. In the tenement-house, man, woman and child must die as they have lived—in public. Children play with the poor, cheap token of a family's sorrow; the other inmates of the tenement sit and lounge in the doorway where it hangs, and talk and laugh; the dingy hallways resound with the voices of the peddlers and merchants who deliver their wares, and with the chaffering of their customers; the undertaker's men arrive with a clatter, and joke with the neighbors as they halt before the door; often the streamer flutters over the wares of the shopkeeper who has his store or stand on the ground floor.

One day last week there was a small crowd around one of the many sticky, fly-besieged, evil soda water fountains that are erected everywhere on the sidewalk. From the doorway alongside, white crape, with a few sad little artificial blossoms wreathed around it, waved in the damp, warm wind, and at last whipped into the glass of poisonous-looking pink fluid that a customer had just raised to his lips. Shrill laughter from the bystanders greeted the incident. Then followed a bitter dispute, in which, before long, a score of men and women were enthusiastic participants, because the customer demanded that the owner of the fountain replace what part of the drink had been lost.

Upstairs a little form, wasted until it looked startlingly like a big, broken doll, lay on a bed in a room crowded with chattering neighbors. All who passed through the common hall craned their necks to look in over the shoulders of those who filled the room. No man who went by the open door where the tiny corpse lay took off his hat. On the threshold stood a large woman with her elbows glistening with the soapsuds of her week's washing. She was telling an interminable story of one of her children that was "as sick as this one," and how it would have lived if she had only done so and so.

The mother sat by the bed of her baby. Now and then she would reach out furtively and pat the little dead hands. Now and then she would cry, quietly, with piteous self-repression. The father? He was away working as usual—no, not quite as usual, for he had taken a heavy heart with him that morning. The large woman broke off once in her tale to wonder how he felt. "I always feared, sort of," she said, "that maybe he made too much of Esther. Don't you remember," she appealed to the mother, "how he used to call to her as soon as he got to the corner and hold out his arms for her and carry her home? Poor man! Poor man! Is he goin' to work all day today. It's good he's got it to do, though. Funerals is terrible expensive. When our little Sammy died," and the endless tale began anew.

When the father appeared at last, walking slowly up the street with a new stoop in his weary shoulders, there was no diminution of interest. Men and women stopped him on the street and the children crowded around him and listened. A neighbor woman bustled into the kitchen and cooked his supper for him, calling on him continually with kindly, low-voiced insistence to "Come away, now; come away from her and eat. You can't do her no good, poor little dear. She's better off, she is, indeed, and you must think of the rest."

"The rest" were on the street, being made heroes of to an extent, but not too much; and being envied openly by other children for their coming opportunity to ride in a carriage. Their sharp little faces, unnaturally knowing, seemed wiser than ever as they described to their circle what the undertaker had done, and how much the funeral would cost.

Not Humanity Brutalized.

Yet this humanity of the tenements is not humanity brutalized. This humanity is bound together by communal ties far closer and more intimate than are those of happier districts. But it is humanity in battle. The tenement-house dwellers look forward to the annual Summer dying of the children as unquestioningly as the soldier looks forward to the dying comrades in war. Generation after generation has seen it. In the Spring mothers look at their offspring and ask themselves which ones are likely to be taken. They tell each other that such a one probably will not live through August. Mute, uncomplaining, they take heed of the heat as it grows; unconsciously heroic, they face death in a struggle that is more direct than any except where two men stand face to face to kill; they trudge for 10 and 15 long, stifling blocks, carrying a sick, complaining child to the ugly river piers to catch a stray puff of air that happier mortals would sniff at in disdain, but that to these mothers it is God's own mercy sent to earth.

The crowds that block the sidewalk on the day of a funeral so that way hardly can be cleared for the coffin; the hundreds of faces that stare with open curiosity into the face of the mother as she goes to the carriage, are not there because they lack sympathy. Through generation after generation of conditions to which no breeder of cattle would dream of subjecting his stock, they have been robbed of the human knowledge that what grief craves more than anything on earth is privacy. In their bewildered notions of living they despoil the bereaved of their communion with their loved dead, because they know no means for showing sympathy that is not public.

They die as they have lived—in utter, uncompromising publicity. The first cry of the newly born is hailed by neighbors, and often the neighbors' children, thronging around the bed. Childhood's little griefs and joys belong by acknowledged right to "the street." The dark, odorous rooms are places to cook in and otherwise only to seek when shelter becomes absolutely necessary. The real life of the tenement, from childhood to death, is on the street, the fire-escape and the roof.

Long before the prosperous folk of the country had evolved the beautiful idea of the roof garden, the poor of New York had their roof gardens, not for pleasure, but as vital factors of living. Unlovely roof gardens they were and are, with clothes posts and lines instead of vines, smoking, soot-scattering chimneys instead of fluted columns, and the hundred stenches of dirty streets and suffocating thousands instead of cooler airs.

There, night after night, the tenement-house folk gather to enjoy the nearest approach to untrammeled social life that they can ever know. Lounging around on the painted tin, blistered from the combined heat of the day's sun overhead and the kitchen fires of the multitude of families below, they make love. Somebody in every house is sure to have a banjo. Another somebody is sure to have that cruelly mournful but beloved instrument, the accordeon. The young women sit under the stars, which shine as brightly there as elsewhere, and romance blots out for a time the ugly surroundings, deafens their ears mercifully to the squalls of the children on the streets, the shrieks of overwrought mothers and the tumult of public din and trouble that beats the air in unceasing rhythm. They lean happily against the shoulders of their "steady" or their "feller," who has not yet arrived at that blissful position, but is only the one that the girl is "going with." They sing, with intense sadness, of how they will never leave their mother or of the young girl that died in the blue Alsatian Mountains. The blue Alsatian Mountains have been the favorite place of romance for the tenement-house dwellers on the roof o' nights for 20 years, and they still hold their own fairly well against even the ragtime airs of today.

Some day a municipal statistician will make a table showing the startling numbers of thousands of marriages that have been arranged on the tenement roofs of New York. One of New York's greatest Tammany Mayors and one of Tammany's most prominent present leaders both wooed their wives at the same time on the same roof. "Ah," said the leader to an intimate circle of friends one day, "with all the money that has come my way, I wish many a time for the nights when we sat on the tenement roof and played the banjo and courted our girls."

He does wish it, indeed, and some day he will "move back" into the East Side, whence he emerged. That is a wonderful feature about the tenement world; men who were boys there long for it again in after life, and there are hundreds living in its heart now whose money would enable them to dwell on Fifth avenue. They love the sounds of the accordeon wailing from the roof, and the barrel organs wailing on the streets, and the children singing, and the loud, eager, endless talking of the thousands, all blent in one vast, unique harmony that spells "Summer" to the tenement-house dweller as the zipping of the crickets and the chirping of katydids do to the country dweller.

He "Goes" With Her.

When a young man goes with a girl the whole street knows it and discusses it with eager interest, not only in her absence, but with her directly; if either are important at all—if the young man is prominent in a "gang" or politics or local business, or if the girl is superior in beauty or earning capacity or dress—the whole ward takes control of the affair, not at all to the displeasure of those concerned. For have not the ward and the street seen them both come into the world, toddle through it to their teens and grow into what they are?

The ward and the street may talk as they will. The two will answer the allusions and the jests with loud laughter and unabashed frankness. They will walk hand in hand in the streets; for that pretty, quaint custom of country swains, long since abolished in the polished city sections, still is common here of all places—in the most crowded dens of population in the world, where, until the small parks were made there a few years ago, there were scores on scores of children who had never seen a tree!

Wars of the "Streeters."

East Side boys live a life of war such as the ancient guilds used to live. The "Sheriff streeters" move abroad in great bodies of armed youth, ranging in age from 6 to 15 and in equipment from scantlings to the effective brick, and pounce upon the "Third streeters," or vice versa. The "Mangin streeter" or "Stanton streeter" dare not venture into the domain of the "Delancey streeter" or "Rivington streeter" excepting after laborious arrangements of truce.

The periods of combativeness of the "streeters" occur irregularly. Often their greatest wars break out because time is dull on their hands. If a "streeter" takes a top from another "streeter," the episode may lead to tremendous strife. These wars between streets are not to be laughed at. A crowded street will be cleared miraculously of its occupants—sidewalk merchants, shoppers and screeching parents—when two antagonistic gangs of "streeters" suddenly pour into it, appearing as suddenly from nowhere as ever the painted red men did.

Over and over again the police reserves have to be called out; for a "streeter" is as desperate in his battles as a knight of old, and will fight policemen cheerfully when the ardor of a gang battle is on him, though in less heroic epochs of his career he may flee at the mere "G'wan, youse," of the mildest policeman.

The glad day of the streeters, and of a great percentage of the rest of the tenement-house population is "launching day." Launching day occurs in mid-Summer. It is an institution so old that the mind of the oldest barrack dweller cannot recall a time when it was not. The great tenement house civilization in youth holds the almost universal belief that launching day is hallowed by the laws of the land. Its observance is simplicity itself. Everybody tries to shove everybody else into the river. Persons are not respected. If a man or boy be so forgetful of the manners of the day as to stand anywhere near the edge of a pier on the river front, where a good push will send him over, the good push is sure to come. Naturally, strangers are the most ready prey. The better a person is clothed the more innocent glee does his successful launch produce. Enthusiastic tenement house youth wears old clothes on launching day, that it may leap overboard after such persons as unhappily show that they cannot swim.

The river being the one great breathing place for the barrack world, most boys and men can swim wonderfully well. Consequently few victims drown, although generally one or two at least are inconsiderate enough to do this on every launching day, making it necessary for the boys to fish for them instead of launching new ones.

Dwellers Under Piers.

In the Summer hundreds of the boys practically live on the river fronts. Some of them dwell there entirely, sleeping at night under the piers on the floorings just over the water, which places are known as "parlors." Occasionally their possession of a "parlor" is disputed by a colony of Italian garbage scow trimmers, who also have a fancy for this reversion to the prehistoric life of the lake-dwellers. Occasionally the huge, mangy, brown dock rats fight them. But the tenement-house boy fears neither man, rat nor devil, and usually holds whatever possession he chooses to make his.

Sometimes a boy is drowned. That is not really remarkable, since the youth of the east and west sides rather despises the sybarite who waits to learn to swim in the floating free baths. The real tenement-house boy finds out whether or not he can swim by jumping off into the river from the string piece of a pier. The water being anywhere from 30 to 60 feet deep, and the current being swift enough always to tax the wheels of a ferry-boat to stem it, the boy has no time to theorize. If he begins to sink, there usually are swimmers enough to dive for him and drag him to the pier.

Tenement-house boys believe implicitly, however, that nobody drowns unless he has begun to go down for the third time. This often makes them unfortunately tardy in pulling a sinking comrade out quite soon enough.

When a boy drowns it almost always is in the presence of a crowd, for there is no time in the 24 hours in Summer that a pier along the river front is not occupied by gasping, overworked men, sad mothers with drooping, feverish little ones and couples who walk up and down, hand in hand, occasionally saying a kind word to each other. Once the crowd is satisfied that the boy really has defied nature by refusing to come up a second or even a first time, and that he surely is drowned, there is a struggle in every breast between the desire to stay and watch the absorbing operation of grappling for the victim and the equally great desire to carry the news to the relatives of the victim.

Within a few seconds the latter emotion wins in enough persons to insure a regulation tenement-house procession of bearers of evil tidings. There is a race from the pier to be the leader. As soon as the street is reached the foremost set up their cry: "Patsy Mulligan is drownded! Down by the Third-street dock! I'm goin' home to tell his mother!"

The street takes it up with a thousand tongues. The news roars ahead of the eager bearers of it. Long before they reach the block of tenement-houses where the parents live the mother and father, frightened vaguely by the cries that link their son's name with something, are on the street with a new line of fear set in their faces already so careworn.

Breaking the News.

There is no breaking of news on the "street." The "street" is bawling it at them in a dozen dialects. Off they set, hurrying as fast as their trembling limbs will carry them, toward the river, and behind and beside and in front of them presses the eager "street," shouting and yelling the news. Half-way down the block their other children come running toward them, crying aloud in a blending of grief and fear. Without stopping, the parents take them by the hands and hurry on, dumb, tragic figures leading a tawdry procession.

If the boy has been found when they arrive at the pier and there are no police or other officials there, the chances are that they will see his body floating in the water, face down, tied to the pier with a rope. For tenement-house folk still hold the haunting conviction that it is illegal to touch a body till the Coroner sees it. Standing on the stringpiece with a staring crowd around them, the parents then will wait humbly and submissively for the police or Coroner. When the police arrive and eager ones point them out, they answer questions quietly. If the woman sobs a little when replying, the chances are that she will apologize to the policeman for it.

Even after their child has been laid on the pier, they may not have the body. It generally is carried first to the station-house, whither the parents follow it on foot. There, again, they answer questions, quietly, uncomplainingly. When at last they get their dead, it is brought to the house as the center of a vast concourse, a concourse of running, pushing, struggling, clamorous people that fill the street from stoop line to stoop line, so that often the body must be lifted high over their heads to be brought into the dwelling.

And before they have composed his hands and begun to realize their loss, the great tenement-house world is a-roar outside with something else. On the roofs the banjos and the accordeons are sending out the strains of the latest comic song; the voices of the children that the boy played with only a few hours ago float into his little room, gay with "London Bridge Is Tumbling Down"; two of his best chums are fighting on the sidewalk just below, cheered on by happy beholders.

As the night goes on the room becomes choking hot. From all directions come the sounds of heavy, troubled slumber. The fire escapes in the rear tenement opposite, mounting up and up from the gloom of a mephitic rear yard to the roof, seven stories above, are filled with men and women and children—a very chasm of sleep. The dreamers mutter and groan and toss. Even in their temporary oblivion they are tortured by life; the hand of the heat presses heavily on them, the fetid air poisons their lungs, the iron girders of their resting places goad them. And they must awaken—men and women and little children—awaken again in the morning, for another day of heat and pain.

None of them sleeps so well or so peacefully as the boy. WALTER SLOANE.

(Copyright, 1902.)

Asleep on a Tenement House.

The Children Know No Life Except that Of the Street...

NEW YORK'S "400" AT WASHINGTON

WIFE OF BRITISH AMBASSADOR WILL BE "IT" IN SOCIETY THIS WINTER

WASHINGTON—Aug. 2.—(Special correspondence.) — Members of the capital's most exclusive social circles are predicting that the season of 1902-03 will be the most brilliant Washington has ever known. And this prediction is invariably followed by another—that a greater number of New York's ultra-fashionable set will participate in the gayeties than ever before.

Much of this pleasurable anticipation is based upon the succession of the Hon. Michael Henry Herbert to the British Ambassadorship, and the fact that Mrs. Herbert will preside over the social functions of the British Embassy. This latter means more to Washington socially than would the coming to that city in a similar capacity of any other of England's fair daughters, adopted or otherwise. For, of course, it is known that Mrs. Herbert was before her marriage an American of Americans.

New York's "400" to Enter.

One reason, one great reason, for the confidence displayed by those who are prophesying such social brilliancy for Washington is the fact that Mrs. Herbert will, through her family connections, bring into the capital's social affairs with greater frequency and in greater numbers than they have ever before appeared the members of New York's "400." First and foremost on the list are the Goelets, the R. T. Wilsons and the Cornelius, Jr., branch of the Vanderbilts.

Mrs. Herbert was Miss Lelia Wilson, second daughter of R. T. Wilson. Mrs. Ogden Goelet is her sister. So is Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr. Through these and her own personal popularity in New York's highest society circles the wife of the new British Ambassador will wield a power socially far greater than has ever before been wielded by the wife of any representative in this country of a foreign government.

Not only in New York has Mrs. Herbert valuable connections. Her social ramifications extend even into the most exclusive of the Hub's Back Bay sets. Only a few months ago, Richard T. Wilson, Jr., Mrs. Herbert's brother, married Miss Marion Mason, daughter of one of Boston's multi-millionaires, and a member of a family which has for generations been to the fore in everything socially in that city which bore the stamp of ultra-exclusiveness.

All this means, of course, that Ambassador and Mrs. Herbert will have a good share of New York and Boston's wealthiest and most brilliant society folk to aid them in their social efforts. The words "good share" are used advisedly with reference to New York.

That city's "400" will, unless an unlooked for change takes place, be found divided as far as the Herberts are concerned. Not because they have anything against either the new British Ambassador or his wife. They haven't. It is because of a peculiar condition of affairs which dates back to the marriage of Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., to Mrs. Herbert's sister.

Cause of Bitter Rivalry.

So unalterably opposed, to the marriage was Cornelius Vanderbilt, Sr., he practically left his eldest son and namesake out of his will, and made his second son, Alfred Gwynne, his principal heir. This action on his father's part cost Cornelius, Jr., something like $40,000,000, but as the family afterward made a settlement by which he received $10,000,000 he was not left penniless. There was left, however, a feeling of resentment on the part of the Wilsons that was only natural in a family of exceeding great wealth and a fixed position as members of New York's social "holy of holies," the "100," and which has since made itself manifest in what might almost be termed a bitter rivalry for social pre-eminence.

In New York and abroad the Wilsons have attained a reputation for social aggressiveness—an aggressiveness which has nearly always resulted in conspicuous triumphs. In the case of Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., there has been no exception. As an illustration of this fact, it is only necessary to recall how she triumphed over the rival branch of the Vanderbilt family last Spring, when she secured Prince Henry as a guest at a private dinner given at her home, in spite of her mother-in-law and all the powerful influences the latter could possibly marshal in opposition.

Naturally Mrs. Cornelius, Sr., and the Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilts have a following, and this following will not be very likely to add by their presence to the brilliancy of the British Ambassador's social functions. But it is a safe guess that these are in the minority, and that there will be enough of New York's inner circles to flock to Mrs. Herbert's standard, and incidentally the standards of Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., Mrs. Ogden Goelet and the R. T. Wilsons to make the coming Washington season a dazzling one.

It is accepted as an inevitable fact by those who acknowledge fealty to the Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., faction that the coming to this country of the Hon. Mrs. Michael Henry Herbert as the wife of an Ambassador, who at Washington outranks in importance all the other official representatives of foreign countries, will greatly increase the social prestige of the Wilsons, the Ogden Goelets and the Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jrs. The Ambassador to the United States from Great Britain is a personage whose social influence, both in his own country and that to which he is accredited, is vast. In the hands of the Herberts, and especially those of Mrs. Herbert, this influence will be farther reaching than ever before, and it will be only natural for the wife of the new Ambassador to use it as best she can for the benefit of her relatives, even if it should prove to the discomfiture of the latter's social rivals. Doubtless it was this which inspired the remark of one of the latter when the official announcement of the selection of the Hon. Michael Henry Herbert to succeed the lamented Lord Pauncefote was made.

"Just the Wilson luck!" this fair one exclaimed. "Everything seems to go just right for them every time."

Of course, it is not to be understood that Mr. and Mrs. Herbert, or either of them, will take part in any social scrimmage. Far from it. But the opportunities afforded what is sometimes known as the Wilson section of New York's "400" by their official presence in Washington will be many, and if the past is any indication none of them will be lost sight of. Naturally this will add to the dazzling qualities of the Washington season.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert are extremely popular in the society of London and Paris, to which latter city Mr. Herbert has been accredited by his government for some time, and it is a well-deserved popularity. Much of Mrs. Herbert's share of it is based upon her remarkable ability as a charming hostess, an ability which those who know her well say she will give the capital frequent chances to pass judgment upon.

There is another thing which will help to make for the Herberts a notable social success in their new position. Both Mr. and Mrs. Harbert unreservedly admit their fondness for America and Americans. Mrs. Herbert, naturally, because this is her native country, and Mr. Herbert because of the fact that he has already spent several years here and enjoys the friendship of many Americans of prominence of both sexes.

In addition to being the possessor of a private fortune of considerable magnitude, the new Ambassador is to enjoy the honor of having the salary attached to his post increased to $45,000 a year, a sum which he will probably find exceedingly useful in connection with the series of brilliant entertainments which he and his beautiful wife are expected to inaugurate, and which will doubtless result in a whirl of gayety which will make even Washington open its eyes.

Mr. Herbert is a younger son of that distinguished family, the Herberts of Lea, of which the head is Lord Sidney Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery. Michael Herbert was charge d'affairs of the British Legation here during the interim after the dismissal of Lord Sackville-West by President Cleveland, and held this post for some months in 1888 and 1889. He afterward was secretary of the British Legation from 1892 until 1893, before Lord Pauncefote was raised to the rank of Ambassador.

He has served also at various European posts and was transferred to Paris to succeed Sir Henry Howard as first secretary of the British Embassy and Minister Plenipotentiary. This is an anamalous post and was created during the time that Lord Dufferin and Ava was incapacitated to perform all of his duties. The first incumbent was Sir Henry Howard, who held it until transferred to The Hague. The convenience of the arrangement was recognized, and it was continued under the regime of the present Ambassador, Sir Edmond Monson.

NEW BRITISH AMBASSADOR AND HIS AMERICAN RELATIVES

Hon. Michael Henry Herbert, new British Ambassador.

Mrs. Michael Henry Herbert, wife of the British Ambassador.

Mrs. Ogden Goelet, sister of Mrs. Herbert.

Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., sister of Mrs. Herbert.

Bob: Story of a Wise Old Boy

BOB was a very uncommon yellow dog. The Irish woman who presented him to his mistress said, "That dog's a perfect gintleman, that's what he is"; Bob's subsequent behavior fully justified this estimate of his character. He was always the most chivalrous of dogs, a pattern to his own kind and to his betters. Although he was an immense animal, and never hesitated to attack man or beast, even if twice his size, all small and helpless things seemed to know instinctively that he would protect them.

A cat, which was always known as "Bob's friend" thereafter, strayed on the place when she was but a timid little kitten. She walked right up to where the big dog lay. He bent over and licked her face, and kitty purred, and proceeded to lie down across his big paws and go to sleep.

From his puppyhood days Bob constituted himself the champion of women and children. A workman on the place of whom he was fond, in assisting some visitors from a carriage, held the baby in his arms while the mother was getting out. The child cried, and Bob sprang at his friend with a growl, and had him by the leg, not letting go till the mother took the child and restored peace.

Bob's mistress lived in a lonely little cottage near a wood, and to protect her the dog lay on a mat inside the bedroom door. No matter how much barking might be going on in the neighborhood, however late his mistress slept, Bob invariably waited till his mistress rose and let him out doors before saying his say. Sometimes, when the barking became frantic and Bob could with difficulty restrain himself, he would shut his mouth tight and "woof" under his breath.

With all his virtues, Bob had one disreputable trick. He loved to run into pasture lots and annoy the grazing cattle.

One day, when his mistress started for the village, Bob stopped at a neighbor's and invited an old dog to accompany him. Bob enticed poor old Jack into every pasture lot, and taught him how to jump up and bark at the poor beasts. Jack was an apt pupil, and in spite of the efforts of Bob's mistress, the two dogs soon had terrorized cattle flying about in all directions.

Bob's mistress was overtaken on the road by a friend with a horse and buggy, and Bob rushed up to pay his respects to both horse and driver, whom he knew. Poor old Jack did not know them, however, and, having been warmed up to the sport of annoying cattle, he repeatedly jumped for the horse's head. Each time Bob jumped up between Jack and the horse and bowled his dog friend over, plainly informing him that a horse which belonged to a friend of his mistress was not to be molested.

He kept looking back at his mistress in the most shame-faced, hang-dog manner, as if apologizing for his friend's conduct.

Bob always drew a sharp line between his friends and his foes.

An Atlantic City paper has an article on John W. Gates, who it says is the man "who recently laid down the United States Treasury portfolio to engage in private business." The well-informed editor adds that "Mr. Gates evidently finds more excitement in the corn pit than in a National bank or in the routine life of the Treasury Department."