

## POVERTY AND DISEASE

The Manly Report on Industrial Relations shows that the death rate of children whose fathers earn less than \$10 a week is 256 per thousand while those whose fathers earn \$25 or more per week die at the rate of only 84 per thousand. Thus the poor die at three times the rate of the fairly well-to-do.

That poverty is the cause of many diseases has long been recognized. Of tuberculosis it is claimed by high authority (see Report of Public Health Service on Tuberculosis in American Cities,) that "the great factor underlying the entire problem is seemingly that of economic conditions." In the tenement districts of Cincinnati the tuberculosis death rate was found to be three times as great as in the better sections. A similar situation was discovered in Pittsburg.

Col. Wm. C. Gorgas, Surgeon-General U. S. A., has recounted the result of his observations in Panama showing the connection between improvement in wage conditions and the health of the people. He says:

"At Panama shortly after our arrival we increased the wages of the common laborers from eleven cents an hour to twenty cents an hour. This was nearly four times the wages of the laborer in the surrounding countries. The laborer knew that every fourth man would die each year of diseases prevalent on the Isthmus and it took strong inducements to get him to come at all.

This large increase in wages caused a great general improvement in all living conditions,—more room to live in, better food, and better clothing. I am satisfied that to this improvement in social conditions, caused by our high wages, we principally owe our extraordinary improvement in general health conditions. It is a health officer's duty to urge forward in his community those measures which will control individual diseases, but my long experience has taught me that it is still more his duty to take that broader view of life which goes to the root of bad hygiene, and do what he can to elevate the general social conditions of his community. This, my experience has taught me, can best be accomplished by increasing wages."

## POVERTY AND CRIME

That poverty breeds crime statistics abundantly testify. Much the larger proportion of girls and boys in reformatories and houses of refuge come from homes of poverty. In the New York Reformatory School for Girls not one came from a home where the father earned more than a thousand dollars a year. The Senate Vice-Committee of the Illinois legislature after investigation said, "That poverty is the principal cause, direct and indirect, of prostitution." This same committee were unable to learn of a single prostitute in Illinois who had come from a home of even modest prosperity.

<sup>1</sup>Public Health Bulletin 73, Washington, D. C.