

Noise and Health

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It is worthy of note that increasing amount of attention is given of late to the subject of unnecessary noises in all the more civilized communities of the world, and especially in cities where noise-producing agencies are so concentrated.

Noise is known by the laity to have an injurious effect upon sick people, as familiarly illustrated to all the world by spreading the street with straw or tanbark in front of a sick person's house, and it is a fact that noise may be a torture even to persons apparently able-bodied who are nervously susceptible.

The savage does not dislike noise but rather revels in it, and the races of men may be said to be noisy in proportion to their savagery; the worse portion of every race is the noisier portion; the worse sex is the noisier sex; the young of all races are barbarians and are noisy. Silence has always been acknowledged to be golden, and it may be said to be golden in this sense—that it is expensive. Fortunes are expended in devices for suppressing noise; societies are being organized, and in many cases the aid of courts has been invoked to subdue the clangor of bells, whistles and wheels.

In a recent medical journal we read that after the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, England, had refused to have the town clock muffled at the request of a patient recovering from an opera-

tion in the hospital near by, the city council ordered the apparatus of the clock adjusted so as to cut off the ear-splitting stridency from 7:30 PM to 5 AM

Another journal tells of the edict of the Board of Health of Mt. Vernon, NY, ordering that bell-ringing, switching of trains except for through traffic, etc., shall be prohibited between 10 PM and 6 AM We have all noticed the general complaint about pandemonium of New Year's night, and the efforts to stop it; American Medicine pertinently says of noise—"it is more than a nuisance, it is a menace to health."

A pathetic yet funny incident came to our notice illustrating both sides of the question, when a few years ago a boy of four who had been taught to keep quiet in the early morning for fear of waking his parents, and who was then convalescing from typhoid fever, being distressed by the whistle of a tug out in the lake whispered "stop," "stop," each time the fearful din was repeated.

We predict that a very few years will see a change in the attitude of the community toward noise, and that even the ears of the public servants who sit in the common council will become more sensitive in obedience to a general sentiment which will require those not naturally sensitive to noise-nuisance to consider the larger number who are.