

CHAPTER 11 - A Cry For Fresh Air

The story begins with a familiar fairy tale where a disgruntled old witch curses a princess's life, turning blessings into burdens. This serves as a metaphor for the state of modern society, where the gifts of science and industry, intended to improve life, have instead caused harm. The discovery of central heating, once unimaginable to the courtiers of Louis XIV, has transformed from an extravagant luxury into an essential part of life. But this change begs the question: has it been beneficial, physically or mentally, for society?

In other lands, spring brings joy and vitality, but in our over-heated, artificially-controlled environments, such seasonal delights are lost. People who have been living in a constant, stifling warmth find it difficult to appreciate the nuances of a mild spring day. Even in public spaces, such as schools, children endure overheated rooms, a situation justified by a teacher's reluctance to open windows due to her cold. This lack of ventilation results in pale, unhealthy children, a condition seen across schools in the city.

The widespread use of heating has led to a preference for stifling warmth in all environments, including public vehicles. The introduction of heating methods like Franklin's stoves and steam heat, while initially promising, has reduced the natural ventilation that once kept people healthy. The consequences are visible: the rosy cheeks of children have disappeared, and social spaces lack vitality.

Despite complaints about summer heat, there seems to be an increasing acceptance of living in overheated conditions. Offices and homes are sealed off, with air never properly refreshed, leading to poor health among workers. One individual who spends his days near a radiator suffers from constant colds but recalls being healthier when exposed to freezing temperatures in a farmhouse. This situation highlights how our obsession with warmth may be damaging our health.

Many inventions, like stationary washstands and revolving doors, are designed to exclude fresh air, further contributing to unhealthy, stagnant environments. Today, cool rooms are a luxury, and having an open fire has become a symbol of refinement and good taste. A room filled with invisible, excessive heat now represents bad taste, while a warm, crackling fire is a hallmark of culture and hospitality. The contrast between these two extremes underscores how our disregard for fresh air and natural temperature has led to a serious loss of balance in our living environments.